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BLOUNT TEMPEST.

VOL. III.

BLOUNT TEMPEST.

BY

THE REV.

J. C. M. BELLEW.

“ Ah me ! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth ;
* * * * *
And ere a man hath power to say, Behold !
The jaws of darkness do devour it up ;
So quick bright things come to confusion.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1865.

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BLOUNT TEMPEST.

CHAPTER I.

A BELGRAVIAN DINNER-PARTY.

IT is impossible to say what could have determined Mrs Digby Shirley to be presented at Court. Perhaps it was suggested by her husband, who, in the enjoyment of his Belgravian dignity, wished to obtain a little more social distinction ; perhaps her daughters were anxious for the opportunity of having their dresses described in the morning papers ; perhaps it arose from seeing Mrs Coventry Dobbs, who lived next door, going and returning in such tremendous state at the last Drawing Room.

It is not imperative to trace the causes of this

phenomenon. Mrs Shirley was accompanied by her elder daughter (in comparison with her, as brilliant as the planet Venus is compared to the Moon), as well as by the gentle Georgey, who consoled herself for not looking so grand as either, with the knowledge that she was much prettier.

The coachman had a new livery for the occasion, and looked in his plush and wig, half peony, half cauliflower. The footman was made to match, and both carried on their manly bosoms, as they sat on the box of the brougham, bouquets almost as large as umbrellas.

There was a tremendous sensation in Wilton Street when the equipage dashed off with its magnificent freight. The Shirleys, male and female, were exceedingly elated, for they had seen Mrs Coventry Dobbs watching their departure through a hole in her drawing-room curtains. Mrs Shirley exulted in her triumph, the Misses Shirley had nudged each other's bare elbows crimson, in the excess of their satisfaction; their estimable father contented himself with thinking what would be said about them to old Dobbs,

when he came home from Mincing Lane, to his six-o'clock dinner.

The carriage fell into the line at Knights-bridge. Thence, all the way along Piccadilly, it stopped half an hour for every five minutes it moved. The pedestrians were able to enjoy private views of the magnificent inmates, which some of them did with a degree of scrutiny that was trying to their patience. Swellish-looking gentlemen would stare through their eye-glasses, as if observing a group of wonderful wild beasts; snobbish-looking fellows would puff bad cigars into the window, and examine the inmates as farmers would a pen of Southdowns; vulgar little boys would poke in their inquisitive, dirty noses, and make comments in language that was seldom grammatical and rarely flattering.

One would say in a thrilling whisper, "Ain't we cutting it fine!" Another would murmur, "It's only wax-work, it don't mind."

Down St James's Street they had to run the gauntlet of the opera-glasses and the jokes of the clubs. Like Falstaff, they were the cause of wit in others. They had the advantage of provoking

many a laugh, and of hearing it, but they very soon found out that, though going to Court may be very amusing to lookers-on, it is desperately dull work to those who go.

However, they arrived at the Palace without any mishap, the servants preserving their dignity and their white gloves, till they had deposited their load, and were on their way to a back-street to refresh their thirsty souls. It was not till the Shirleys reached "the pen" that they began to appreciate the full extent of the honour they had bought at so much cost. It was Bartlemy fair at St James's, or Lord Mayor's day, or a birth-day illumination, or a contested election, or any other aggravated state of crowd. They were, in short, in a well-dressed mob. Pressing, squeezing, thrusting, elbowing, pushing, crushing, they swayed hither and thither, spoiling and toiling, till they had lost their jewels and their tempers, torn their trains, marred their plumes, ruined their dresses, and nearly fatigued themselves to death. The great pressure may be accounted for by the fact that the drawing-room was held under peculiar circumstances. The

season was almost at an end. The first week of August had passed, and yet the fashionable world had collected from all quarters for the occasion. A monarch and his consort, with whom we were cultivating an alliance, happened to be in England; and the drawing-room, with presentations, was specially given in honour of the event.

When the maternal Shirley got emancipated from this Slough of Despond, and found several of her borrowed diamonds missing, and much of her costly lace in shreds, her countenance was not exactly suited to a Royal presentation. However, Her Majesty can make allowances for matrons in a fume and maids in a flutter. The presentation was gone through without anything occurring to cause remark, and Mrs Shirley and the Misses Shirley were able to boast of having been to Court.

This occurrence was the occasion of a grand dinner party at Wilton Street, when the new liveries were shown off to the greatest possible advantage to deeply-impressed guests, and the new Court dresses would have been paraded with equal effect had not the pressure of circumstances

in the memorable "pen" reduced them to such a wreck, it was a question whether they could ever be worn again.

The guests included, among others, Sir John and Lady Pole, Lady Whappleshaw, who had so kindly officiated at the important ceremony of the day, and therefore deserved to be sumptuously feasted, the Hon. Belinda Carruthers, who was doing her customary round of London dissipation, and Mr Trigg, the junior partner in the firm.

Mrs Digby Shirley gazed proudly from over the silver soup-tureen at the head of the table, on the guests she had contrived to assemble. She would attract the aristocracy in time. The dinner was served, and due justice done to it. The principal subject of conversation was the recent trial for murder at Launcester, after the more personal interest of the Presentation had been exhausted.

Mr Shirley made much of it, and he effected some importance, as he explained to the astonished banker the murdered man was his client, the murderer's uncle was also his client, and the murderer's brother was his clerk. After the declaration of so many surprising coincidences,

there was nothing extraordinary in the additional fact that his firm had been entrusted with the defence of the accused.

Then came particulars of the trial, and his vivid description was accompanied by a running fire of interjections and exclamations from all round the table. There was but one silent person there. He was a man who could not be pronounced young or old, having a sensible round face and particularly quiet, rather sleepy-looking eyes. His great talent for silence, and the half-closed appearance of his eyelids, frequently made unobservant persons imagine that he was dozing. They never were more mistaken. If there was one man who was particularly wide awake, it was Mr Trigg, the silent member of the dinner-party.

It must not be supposed that, though he made no observations on the conversation going on around him, he took no notice of it. He was the most observant man in the room. Nothing ever escaped Mr Trigg's observation. It was far-sighted and microscopic. He saw into everything, and quite as plainly into everybody. Mr Trigg's eyes never seemed to look at all, nevertheless they looked through and through a man

at a glance, and every such glance was accompanied by a mental process that would very much have astonished the observed, who happened to be under its influence, had he or she been aware of its purport.

Mr Trigg's neat person, in unexceptionable evening costume, but without the slightest approach to foppishness, 'sat between the super-elegant Miss Carruthers and the imposingly-dignified Sir Jonathan Pole, whose festooned chain on his satin waistcoat looked as if it had been feloniously subtracted from the glittering appendage he had worn during his Shrievalty.

Opposite to him was the mask, not the face, of Lady Whappleshaw, offering conclusive evidence against the use of complexion-specifics. Her ladyship had been carefully enamelled, nevertheless it only gave her the complexion of a cheap doll; the resemblance to which was increased by a profusion of youthful brown hair, massed about her head, like a fisherman's net put away for the winter.

Next her ladyship sat the elder Miss Shirley, the impression of her morning annoyances fast fading under the influence of the presence of an

unmarried gentleman, who she knew was rapidly attaining professional status, and on the high-road to fortune. Her magnificent mamma, who sat at the head of the table, in double her ordinary quantity of lace, and double her customary amount of oriental head-gear, knew this also. A third lady entertained a similar idea. She was Belinda Carruthers, who had more experience in looking after eligible acquaintances than either mother or daughter, or both.

The gentleman thus honoured was the reserved, the observant Mr Trigg. He preserved the most perfect unconsciousness, received the attentions of his respected partner's womankind with the same well-bred serenity with which he listened to the amiable gossip of the aristocratic elderly young lady from Hampton Court; received, too, the patronage of the rather uncomfortable-looking ex-Sheriff, whose cravat was a trifle too stiff for his apoplectic throat, as quietly as he took the condescension of the china countenance that kept nodding at him in Mandarin fashion across the *épergne*.

"I think I have seen this nephew of Sir Nigel, Blount Tempest," observed Miss Carru

thers. "He was at Hampton Court some time ago, if I remember right."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mrs Digby Shirley, with a meaning matronly smile. "He drove us from town in his phaeton, drawn by a pair of the most magnificent hunters I ever saw in my life."

"*Hunters*, mamma! How very absurd," cried the unfilial elder daughter, who prided herself on her knowledge of horse-flesh, derived from six lessons in a Pimlico riding school.

"Well, they may have been cobs, or Suffolk punches, or Arabs, or dray-horses, for all I know," exclaimed her mother tartly, who did not like being publicly snubbed. "I have associated so little with grooms and stable-boys as hardly to know one sort of horse from another. All I am certain is, they cost a great deal of money, for Mr Geoffrey Tempest was dreadfully anxious about them."

"I was speaking of the elder brother, dear Mrs Shirley, the young gentleman who was studying at Oxford," observed Miss Carruthers, who was aware the other was nothing more than an articulated clerk.

“Unhappy young man!” replied her hostess, with as much dignity as commiseration. “He is the murderer, you know, and is as good as hanged, still, being so near a connection of my dear young friend Mr Geoffrey, and Mr Geoffrey being *almost*, I may say, one of my family, I cannot help feeling exceedingly distressed at his dreadful end.”

Mrs Shirley nodded her splendid turban significantly at Miss Shirley towards the conclusion of her sentence, conveying a telegram perfectly understood by every one who noticed it. Among these was Mr Trigg, whose half-closed eyes began to wink in a nervous way. Miss Shirley’s complexion grew a degree warmer, she felt annoyed by her mother’s reference to a lover in the past, in the presence of a lover in the future.

“Mr Geoffrey seems to be quite a male flirt,” said the Honourable Belinda, who had contrived, with the ingenuity of elderly young ladies, to learn a good deal about his proceedings at Hampton Court and elsewhere. “To my certain knowledge he was paying his addresses to my dear friend Miss Massey, the ward of the poor

gentleman who was so barbarously murdered : and was rejected in favour of his brother—an old admirer of hers.”

“ I know all about that, my dear,” observed Lady Whappleshaw. “ I went to Hampton Court Palace to visit my friend Mrs Admiral Boyle, and found her full of it. It seems the elder brother had surprised the younger in the act of making a declaration to his fair *fiancée*, and after a violent quarrel, he was turned out of the house.”

Miss Carruthers ventured to correct Lady Whappleshaw. Her maid had an account of the transaction direct from Miss Lawson’s house-keeper. “ As he had obtained access to her pupil by representing himself to be her Oxford beau, that worthy creature, Mrs Wilkins, as soon as she found she had been imposed upon, insisted on his leaving the house.”

Lady Whappleshaw however was equally certain and a great deal more positive ; and something very like a wrangle might have ensued, had not a question from Lady Pole given another direction to the discussion.

“ Wasn’t that young man very sweet upon

a singing-mistress of yours, my dear?" her ladyship inquired.

"O Lady Pole," replied Mrs Shirley, looking a little excited, "you must not call that dear friend of mine a singing-mistress. The most wonderful thing has happened; it has been discovered she is sole heiress to a large estate, and proceedings have already been commenced to establish her claim. Mrs Waverley Montgomery, of whom I dare say your ladyship has heard—" (her ladyship's heavy lips made an unsuccessful attempt to break into a smile of affirmation) "—has been more than a mother to her, as she herself assured me, and has been the principal means of making this very important discovery through a lady whom she met by accident."

The greatest attention was paid to this narrative by every one at table. "It was quite a little romance," the ladies said. Among the gentlemen no one paid so much attention as Mr Trigg. The rapid movement of his eye-lids, and the fixed direction of their half-seen pupils, showed the little romance interested him very much.

"Montgomery is merely a *nom de plume*," remarked the host, addressing the purple-visaged

Sir Jonathan confidentially. "He is one of our clerks, who occupies his leisure with music and newspapers. Makes a good thing of it, I believe."

"Oh!" cried the great man from Clapham.

"By the by," added Mrs Shirley, "your ladyship will have an opportunity of seeing this lady who has turned up so providentially for my dear young friend. Her husband is the new singer, who came out as Leporello. His success was tremendous, I have been told, and he owes it entirely to the Montgomerys. Signor Carbone and his lady will honour my soirée with their company this evening, and the Signor, a most gifted creature, has promised to sing.

"He has the most wonderful voice!" exclaimed Miss Shirley, enthusiastically, to the Honourable Belinda. "It is absolutely thrilling in the lower notes, and as loud as a bassoon."

"And he seems such a nice man too," added Georgey, apparently anxious to record her admiration, "with hair like the raven's plume, and a deliciously expressive swarthy countenance. He would make a love of a brigand!"

"But you haven't answered my question, my

dear Mrs Shirley," said Lady Pole. "This young man, this Geoffrey Tempest, is he not a declared suitor of your wonderful heiress!"

This was a question not quite agreeable to Mrs Shirley. In the first place, the knowledge that the young gentleman whom she had designed for her son-in-law should have gone elsewhere for a wife, was a disappointment; in the next, her recent intimation of his tender intimacy with her daughter was awkward.

"Well, you see, my lady," observed the matron in an apologetic tone, "Mr Geoffrey Tempest will be heir to his uncle's baronetcy and estates, and naturally therefore an eligible, I may say a very eligible, acquaintance for any young lady. Miss Harcourt, it is not improbable, may like to have a gentleman of such excellent expectations in her train, but I have good reason to believe his affections are fixed elsewhere."

"On the ward of the poor Colonel of course," said the maliciously obtuse Lady Whappleshaw, smiling as well as enamel would permit. "His brother being now completely out of the way, you know he has the field to himself."

"I have not much opinion of his chance,"

murmured Belinda to her quiet neighbour, whose grand talent *pour la silence* provoked her to try her voice as well as her looks upon him.* “What do you think, sir?”

The gentleman so addressed raised his head a little, looked into and through his fair questioner out of his half-closed eyes, and winked them very hard for at least a second and a half.

“I think with you, madame, of course,” he replied deferentially.

Miss Carruthers thought Mr Trigg a very gentlemanly man, and by no means bad looking. He was a rising man in his profession, Mrs Shirley asserted; and though the matron had skilfully hinted, at the same time, that he was making up to Miss Shirley, the experienced Belinda saw the hint was one of “the poor old creature’s tarradiddles,” and resolved to cultivate his acquaintance.

“Were I Miss Massey,” Lady Whappleshaw declared, nodding her artificial hair amiably at her opposite neighbour, “I should be at no loss how to receive him, if he came trying to take advantage of his brother’s terrible misfortune.

No right-minded individual could act otherwise, —what do you say, sir ? ”

Mr Trigg did his best to reciprocate the cordial intentions of the china countenance, opposite. He looked right through the enamel, into the heart and into the brain, and having ascertained what was going on there, gave his reply.

“ I am exactly of your ladyship’s opinion.”

Lady Whappleshaw considered him a remarkably well-informed young man. She had not been mistaken in her first impressions of him, “ Still waters run deep.”

Miss Carruthers regarded Lady Whappleshaw’s observation as not worth attention, but then the odious old woman was always forcing herself upon the attention of gentlemen.

Miss Shirley thought it time to make *her* play.

“ I should prefer a more disinterested affection,” she observed to her father’s partner. “ If I were Miss Massey I should despise the man who sought me only for my fortune. A combination of love and mammon is intolerable—what do you think, Mr Trigg ? ”

“I agree with you, Miss Shirley ; it is impossible to think otherwise.”

The young lady was impressed with the propriety of Mr Trigg’s opinions. To be sure, as she said to herself, he was singularly quiet, but then profound thinkers always are. She thought he might make a better husband than Mr Geoffrey Tempest, whose neglect of her since the improvement in his prospects had sent him down at least fifty per cent. in her estimation.

Mrs Digby Shirley now described a semi-circular sweep with her turban, she looked at the two ladies of title, simultaneously the drapery rose, and following the hostess in strict order of precedence, the feminine divers made towards the door. There were but three gentlemen to the six ladies, and the two seniors were too much engaged in an argument that had arisen out of the discussion on the trial, to think of the duties of gallantry. The silent, the observant Mr Trigg turned their negligence to his own profit. With celerity he seized the handle of the door, bowed to, smiled at, and looked through each lady as she passed him, every one acknowledging the little man’s courtesy with

a gracious speech, the younger ones rivalling each other in their gracious looks.

He returned to the table, but did not pay much attention to the conversation. Sir Jonathan was getting either warm with the argument or with the tightness of the bandage over his thorax, which deserved the familiar title of "choker," for the knight's fat face was taking a deeper tinge of purple every five minutes. At last he could endure the pressure no longer; so putting two fat fingers between the folds of the cambric and his shirt collar, he tugged and twisted till he had given himself breathing room.

The half-closed eyes of the junior partner in the eminent legal firm seemed to have lost their vocation. They did not rest upon the portly banker,—perhaps his solid flesh was too dense to allow of the customary penetration; nor did they dwell upon the comfortable Mr Shirley,—possibly they had seen through him before, and were aware further research would bring nothing to light. They were so completely closed, as to suggest the idea of looking inward, which was very near the fact. The silent man was taking

.

stock of his own ideas. He was thinking over his thoughts.

When the argument terminated the self-examination had closed, and Mr Trigg readily followed his host's example, by drinking another glass of Port before joining the ladies, that junction being expedited by sounds of a very stirring nature which penetrated to the dining-room.

"It is the new singer," observed Mr Shirley placidly, as he emptied a magnum.

The reception-rooms set apart for Mrs Shirley's soiree were arranged with more than ordinary Belgravian taste. The pretty ottomans and the tasteful seats in infinite variety, were thronged with a well-dressed company, male and female, who were affecting to listen with fashionable inattention to the singing of a dark-haired, dark-skinned Italian, who, accompanied by the theatrically-dressed Mrs Waverley Montgomery, was executing a scena by Mozart, in which the lower notes in the singer's register were in great requisition.

As Mr Trigg entered, he cast his scrutinizing glance about the room, his half-closed eyes winking with rapidity as they fell on particular per-

sons. Such was the case when they glanced in the direction of the piano ; such too was the case, and still more prominently, when, after rapidly scrutinizing the female faces, they fell upon a modest, quiet-looking, quietly-dressed female, rather *passé*, but still with pretensions to prettiness, who sat by herself in a corner of the room, watching with fearful interest the two figures at the piano-forte.

Mr Trigg lost no time in walking across the apartment in that direction, and placed himself in a chair next that of the lady so unobtrusive and so absorbed. Without preface or introduction the silent man addressed her, looking his penetrating glance out of his half-closed lids, with even more than his usual earnestness of observation.

“ How delightful it is to hear such singing ! ” he exclaimed, with all the enthusiasm of a *fannetico*. “ I never heard so fine a voice. Is it the great vocalist, Signor Carbono ? ”

“ Yes, sir, it *is* Signor Carbono. I ought to know, for he is my husband.”

The little speech was uttered with a simplicity that quite charmed the silent man. He was in

an ecstasy at his good fortune in having thus accidentally fallen in with a person he much desired to meet.

Mrs Carbono felt both fluttered and flattered. What could make such a nice neat-looking gentleman pleased at seeing her? Oh, it was because she was the wife of the great singer.

"The Signor speaks very pure Italian," observed Trigg, listening with a critical air to music of which he knew no more than a cow. "Upon my word, his accent is faultless."

"Yes, indeed," replied the highly-delighted little woman, "when he was a boy at La Pergola he had great advantages."

"Firenze la bella!" exclaimed Trigg.

"Si! Signor!" with a merry smile rejoined the little woman, delighted to meet with some one who was acquainted with a place so familiar to her.

"Charming city," murmured Trigg.

"Of all the fairest cities of the earth,
None is so fair as Florence. 'Tis a gem
Of purest ray'—

"is it not, madame? I am sure you must agree with the poet!"

“Oh, sir, I don’t know much about poetry ; but it is a gem, certainly.”

“Did you live there long, madame?”

“Only during the year after we were married.”

“Married!—then, like all Italians, the Signor is sentimental. I suppose you spent your honeymoon there,” said Trigg, taking the full measure of the small woman’s romantic tendencies of character. “The Signor might well be proud to take a bride to such a home.

—— “‘That place he loved,
Loved as his own; and in his visits there
Well might he take delight!’”

As the countrywoman was overwhelmed with the learning and eloquence of the preacher who had pronounced the word “Mesopotamia,” so Madame Carbono was overwhelmed by the ready and fluent manner in which Mr Trigg could quote poetry applicable to conversation in hand. Many better educated people than the simple-minded and simple-hearted Madame Carbono are equally impressed by an apt quotation, which awes them into as much admiration as the traditional story

of "Mesopotamia" produced upon the mind of the rustic dame.

"My visit there was not a delight, I can tell you," said Madame Carbono, "for the poor lady I accompanied, died!"

"Died! How shocking!—It was not a marriage then, but a funeral that occupied you? I remember, now that you mention it, hearing you had been the companion of"—"of some lady travelling in Italy" were the words Mr Trigg was about to use; but the impulsive small woman was too much interested and excited to allow of her permitting him to conclude his sentence.

"What! did you know Madame Dupont?" with childlike eagerness and curiosity asked Madame Carbono.

Trigg's eyelids winked with a series of such rapid twitches, it might have been supposed a sudden attack of St Vitus's Dance had laid siege to his optic nerves. Madame Carbono was sitting on a low seat, and Trigg was leaning over her during this conversation. The affection of the eyelids altogether escaped her attention, and the astute man of business was far too self-pos-

sessed and collected to betray the smallest surprise, either of expression or gesture. Trigg bowed, and his eye-lashes sprang upwards, as if, to rally from their astonishment, they were retreating under cover into his hair. Madame Carbono concluded that he had the honour of being acquainted with Madame Dupont.

One of the wise men of the West has said, "Seneca predicted another hemisphere, but Columbus presented us with it."

"Land! land! at length the joyful seaman cries :

Land! land! re-echo ocean, earth, and skies."

Columbus made that certain which he had conjectured. What was problematical, he made practical. But it was none the less a discovery ; and though it can be said with less truth of the discovery of Columbus than of most others, still in the multitude of cases the assertion holds good, that many of the most valuable discoveries have been the result of chance, rather than contemplation ; and of accident, rather than design.

A story is told of a North-country Incumbent, who met by accident at the Royal Academy of —, a lady, at whose house he was engaged the

following day to dinner. On pausing to say the usual common-place nothings of social greeting, this reverend gentleman's eyes and heart were transfixed by the beauty of a young lady accompanying his friend. It was love at first sight, turning desperate; and Columbus-like, the whole of that day and the next he was pursuing voyages of discovery in search of the unknown fair one! But to no effect! No one had seen the beauty! No one knew who she could be. Bah! to the dinner-party! It was useless going to anything so stupid, with his thoughts pre-engaged. So an excuse was sent: "An unforeseen engagement, &c., prevented his having the pleasure," &c. &c.

At last baffled curiosity became insufferable. He would call on his friend, and ask the question point-blank. He called, and on entering the ladies' saloon found himself standing in presence of the very person of whom he had been in such painful search. His design and contemplation had failed him; the discovery was all the time close to him, and chance revealed it.

Mr Trigg found himself in the same position. All that day had he been upon a voyage of dis-

covery regarding the impending suit of "Massey v. Massey."

Very considerable information had been picked up by him as he floated along. Just as the mariner sees planks, the drift of vessels, and the proofs of a predecessor's course upon the ocean, as he nears the port to which he steers, so Trigg had come in contact with many scraps of evidence that taught him he was upon the track of the voyagers he desired to discover.

All his hard day's work was nothing to the unexpected discovery upon which he had stumbled. He had indeed heard Madame Carbono was the companion of a lady, who was asserted to be the wife of the late Mr Gerald Massey; but fate had reserved it for Madame Carbono, in her simplicity, to communicate to Mr Trigg information of which he had not the remotest suspicion, and, moreover, information, of the full importance of which he was himself, at the moment, ignorant.

Two or three facts were instantly jotted down in his mental note-book.

Madame Carbono was a married woman, and her husband was with her when she was at

Florence. It was *at Florence* the lady, whom she attended, died. The lady was known as Madame Dupont.

It taxed all the professional self-possession of Mr Trigg, to disguise the astonishment, and the supreme satisfaction, with which he had heard the remark of Madame Carbono. Well was it for her that the Signor, her husband, that interesting élève of La Pergola, was during this conversation so completely devoted to his song, and so entirely pre-occupied with the effect he was producing upon the company, as to be unmindful of his wife, or of the gentleman who had engaged her in conversation. If the charming Signor could have heard his dear little woman's conversation, it is probable that even in such brave society, his fingers would have been fiercely pressed around her windpipe. Happily for her he was profoundly ignorant and unobservant of the conversation taking place between his *cara sposa* and that legal navigator, Mr Trigg.

A sun of information was shining brightly upon Trigg's course, and like a skilful seaman he took his observations. The sextant of evidence was in constant use.

"Miss Harcourt will not be here this evening, I believe," observed Trigg, in an inquiring tone.

"Dear child," said Madame, "she had a previous engagement with her friends at Hampton."

"I suppose we shall have to train our mouths to call her 'Miss Massey,' if she succeeds in this suit. Upon my word, madame, if all that Mrs Shirley said at dinner be true, she will be under immense obligations to you. Miss Harcourt (or rather Harcourt-Massey, as we really must call her) is certainly a very lovely girl."

"Oh! do you know her, sir?"

"I have not that honour, madame, but I have seen her. It is sometimes called a rude question to ask a lady's age; but in the case of one so young and beautiful, it can hardly be. May I be allowed to ask what is Miss Harcourt's age?"

Trigg's eyelids fluttered. He had got Madame Carbono into a corner, without that simple-minded woman for one instant suspecting it. Check to your "King" was cried, before she had the smallest suspicion her board was so open, and her pieces so unprotected.

"Falsehood falsehood cures, as fire cools fire."

It is well for the final triumph of right over wrong, of good over evil, that it should be so. The rôle of the successful liar is not only a difficult part to play, but an impossible one. Sooner or later, falsehood falsehood cures ; and the world benefits in the long run.

Madame Carbono was not the practised athlete at deception the Signor prided himself on being. Madame was incapable of erecting a great falsehood like a citadel, and surrounding it on every side with fortification, scarp, counter-scarp, ditch, and pitfall of lying. The Signor was the man for that. His batteries were always ready to open upon an inquisitive enemy, and he stood with his port-fire burning. Such an unskilful engineer as Madame Carbono was terribly deficient in resources to stop the mines and trenches of such a sapper as Trigg.

Madame was startled and surprised by the question put to her. It was a very simple and a very natural question. Even she had acuteness enough to perceive that unless an instant reply was given, the case for which she was engaged would be damaged.

Singular, is it not, that he who was a liar from

the beginning, cannot make any of his pupils accomplished scholars?

Singular, is it not, the citadels of falsehood are always taken by surprise through some postern, or some trivial point of defence which has been overlooked and neglected?

*Quod quisque vitet, nunquam homini satis
Cautum est in horas——*

Singular, such a long-headed villain as Creevy, such a designing Jezebel as his wife, such a thorough-paced vagabond as Carbono, should never have decided Clara Harcourt's age, and fixed the day and date of her birth for her. The singular little oversight had been committed, and Madame Carbono could not resort to diplomacy, nor plead she was without instructions. There was no social Von Bismark at her elbow, and she felt herself unequal to the evasion or equivocation which the "situation" so much needed. She was frightened of telling an absolute and direct untruth, lest the next moment should expose her. What Clara Harcourt's age was she had no idea. She had never given the subject a thought. So the conversation proceeded.

"I am afraid I am a very silly little woman,

sir ; with a dreadful memory as to ages or dates. Positively I have to count up on my fingers when I want to know how old I am myself. I remember very well we were in Florence at the time Fieschi tried to shoot Louis Philippe. It occurred just before Madame died."

"Was she long ill?"

"Oh dear, no, sir! She was taken with a fit. She received a newspaper one morning from England, and while reading it, gave a great scream, and fell insensible on the floor. She never recovered."

"How exceedingly shocking," said Mr Trigg. "Do you mean she never recovered from the fit?"

"No, sir, never. She seemed dazed ever after, and gradually pined away and died."

"And what age was the child?"

"Baby! poor little darling! She must have been about sixteen or eighteen months old. She was just beginning to talk."

"Fieschi! Fieschi!" mused Mr Trigg. "I cannot remember the year of that murderous attack; but it was before William IV. died, I am certain. Pshaw! the Annual Register will settle

that matter easily! 1835 or 1836, sometime thereabout, it must have been."

"I suppose" (he continued, speaking aloud to Madame Carbono), "I suppose you had been with Madame Dupont from the time of her marriage?"

"Oh dear, no, sir. I never saw her until I was made acquainted with her at Florence. The poor lady was all alone, and I and Carbono engaged to attend upon her."

"Then you never saw Mr Massey?"

"Never."

Mr Trigg was judiciously fearful of plying the little woman with too many questions. So he executed a series of variations upon the subject of the Palazza Pitti, Santa Croce, Fiesole, the Boboli Gardens, and whatever came uppermost. Having successfully diverted the thoughts of Madame Carbono from the subject of his curiosity, and having acquired all the information that she could give him, Mr Trigg took leave of her with a pleasant speech, and strolled carelessly towards the Signor, who had just received the plaudits of his audience, and was moving away from the overblown blossom on the music stool.

"Accept my warm acknowledgments, Signor

Carbono, for the great treat you have afforded me."

The dark-haired, dark-featured Italian found himself accosted by a singularly harmless-looking Englishman.

"I felicitate myself, Signor, that I am fortunate to please you, or any of your illustrious nation. I cannot be too sensible of the goodness to me."

"You are a thorough musician, Signor Carbono, and deserve the success you have achieved. You must have enjoyed the advantage of a first-rate master."

"Ah, Signor, that is true indeed. I was the only son of the greatest *tenoro robusto* in Naples, and he took immense pains with me, that I should have a grand success at San Carlos, and make a fortune. But when I grow older than a boy, I get tired of *solfeggi*. My father make me sing *do re me* so much as nearly all the day long. So I run away from Naples, and never appear at the San Carlos at all. I go away and see the world. I make for myself friends in this city and in that. By and bye, my voice break, and it is not a *tenoro robusto*, but a *basso profondo*; but I have some love of

music, and now and then give it some exercise. Then I go on the stage. I sing in the Opera at Milan, at Rome, and have such encouragement I come to that golden land for *artistes*, your country, and *presto!* poor Marco Carbono find himself among friends."

This speech was delivered with such apparent simplicity and truthfulness, that any ordinary listener might have accepted it as truth. Trigg's half-closed eyes watched every gesture and look of Signor Carbono's with intense interest. The Signor was firing away his batteries, and defending the citadel of his secrets with wonderful strategy. Before him stood the simple and easily deceived Trigg (as he thought), receiving the discharge of sixty-four pounders of falsehood, and remaining unmoved under the tremendous fire. The Signor little suspected that every sentence he uttered, received with the calm and courteous bows of the man Trigg, was accompanied by that individual with an internal exclamation, "liar, liar, liar!"

The Signor, pleased with the complimentary manner of his new acquaintance, was so good as to hope that they should soon meet again.

Mr Trigg made himself so agreeable to Mrs Waverley Montgomery, that this accomplished schemer invited him to join her musical circle in Half-Moon Street. She knew he was one of the firm by which her husband had been employed as a clerk, but circumstances favoured her presumption.

In the course of their pleasant gossip, she observed that Mr Creevy proposed giving up the law in order to devote himself to his musical and newspaper connection, which, with a small property he expected would soon come into his possession, would yield an ample income for all their wants. At this communication the man's eye-lids were so restless, that he was obliged to improvise a joke and a laugh to avoid attracting attention to that ambiguous infirmity.

When the party had broken up, and the two partners were shaking hands previously to their separation, the junior of the two said suddenly,

“Mr Probyn has pressed me in his letters to run down to Lancashire. I shall start the first thing to-morrow morning, Mr Shirley, and probably take our clerk, Whiffler, with me.”

“Take him by all means, my dear Trigg. There is nothing pressing for him to do at office. Remember me to Probyn. Hope you won’t stay long. Terrible fagging work to see all the clients, you know. Good-bye !”

The little man buttoned up his coat closely before he stepped into the street, but he buttoned up his heart and his mind much closer. He felt⁷ he had work before him which would require thoughtful plans closely shut up within himself. He knew the law was a critical game to play upon such an important occasion, and in this instance he had been invited to cut-in when the adversary had shuffled all the best cards into his hands. Nevertheless, little Trigg did not despair. He had learnt enough of Signor and Madame Carbono to convince him they were playing a game, and that the simplicity of the wife had already damaged the cunning of the husband. Trigg had gathered from her a mass of valuable information, which he confidently hoped might be turned to account (to how much account he could not at that instant guess); but on retiring for the night to his Chambers, it must be confessed he regarded

himself as a faithful and assiduous junior partner of the firm of Probyn, Shirley, and Trigg; and considered Trigg had done a good day's work, for which he richly deserved, and would have, a good day's wage.





CHAPTER II.

"A MORNING CALL."

*"Raro antecedentem scelestum,
Deseruit pede poena claudo."*

MR TRIGG was not able to leave London as early as he had anticipated. The observations made by Madame Montgomery, regarding Creevy's retirement from business, struck him as somewhat curious. When he came to ruminate on the coincidence of Miss Harcourt's presumptive heirship and Creevy's simultaneous anticipations of succession to property—when he came to reflect upon the circumstance that both these persons were living under the same roof, and had many objects and pursuits in life in common, Trigg thought it a prudent and perhaps wise measure before leaving London to make himself rather better acquainted with the domestic life and habits of his clerk, Creevy, than he had hitherto been.

There was nothing in the smallest degree particular in Creevy being absent from office at such a period of the year ; because the Courts of Westminster being closed, the clerks in succession were enjoying the annual holidays which were invariably granted them by Mr Probyn. Creevy was absent for his holiday. There was nothing peculiar in that. Nevertheless, Trigg laboured under one of those singular impressions, intuitive impressions, that seize the mind at times (why or wherefore we cannot tell), and impel us to notice and watch, and perhaps suspect some fellow-being, without being able to account to ourselves for the feeling that possesses us ! Madame Montgomery had invited Mr Trigg to do her the honour of calling at her house.

It was not in Trigg's line. He had neither object nor inclination to cultivate acquaintance with the singing wife of a law-clerk, still there was something that said within him, "Go and call," and he went.

According to Mr Probyn's suggestion, Trigg had summoned to his side the trusty Whiffler.

Methusaleh Whiffler, as this veteran servant of the firm was irreverently styled by his juniors,

was a hale, hearty, but intensely venerable individual, who might have stood as a model for King Lear. He had been a model for a good many Vicars of Wakefield, and for a countless multitude of Druids, Popes, Hermits, Judges, Archbishops, and Venerables. He had sat for Father Thames and Old Parr; for the patriarch Abraham and the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, for the Prophet Jeremiah and Doctor Faustus, for Thomas à Beckett and Howard the Philanthropist; in short, there was scarcely an elderly personage in history for whom he had not been the representative on canvas. To borrow the language appropriated to the more attractive of the other sex, his face had of late years been his fortune.

He had been waylaid by students, with awkward invitations to their studios; the result of which was, his there assuming a certain costume, and ultimately appearing as the heavy father in some pictorial tragedy, intended to astonish the academical oligarchy in Trafalgar Square.

The unselect many, not in the secret, were surprised whenever they entered an exhibition of modern art, at the resemblance in the features of

Caractacus, Peter the Hermit, Cardinal Wolsey, the Friar of Orders Grey, or other object of pictorial hero worship, to old Whiffler. In art circles, however, this similarity surprised no one.

Whiffler found his advantage in countenancing the designs of aspiring young painters, but though his person might be in Suffolk Street, his soul was in Lincoln's Inn. He might permit himself to go down to posterity on canvas, at so much per hour, but he desired to rise in the world by the aid of parchment, or other law stationery, at so much per annum. He had been at least half a century employed in the firm of Probyn, and there were very few clerks in any of the Inns of Court who possessed a more thorough knowledge of legal practice.

The firm had great faith in the resources of their veteran clerk. George III. is reported to have said no man could ever have looked wiser than Lord Eldon. The junior partner in the firm considered their clerk not only looked, but on an emergency was capable of acting, more wisely than that famous Chancellor. Well aware that sagacity both in action and in appearance would be much needed in his present enterprise,

Mr Trigg took Whiffler with him to the various places he visited in the pursuit of knowledge, prior to his departure for the North.

Had the ambitious Pre-Raphaelite required a Canute rebuking his courtiers after vainly commanding the waves to stop, or a King Solomon addressing the Queen of Sheba, no face could have been more imposing than Whiffler's. As Trigg informed the astute clerk of his business, his suspicions, and his plans, Whiffler rubbed together his large palms, clasped the knees of his kerseymere trowsers, and gazed out from under his bushy eye-brows, upon the twinkling lids of his companion, with a physiognomy that out-Eldoned the biggest owl in the Keep of Arundel Castle.

The last place they called at was the thriving establishment in Half-Moon Street. Mr Whiffler had been there before, having been invited to the Montgomery concerts by his *confrère* in the office, and had refreshed himself with music when not required to be historical.

Madame welcomed them in her most honied manner. She was delighted to see Mr Trigg, it was so good of him to come so soon and to bring

her old friend Whiffler ! it was really very amiable of him ! She did not know how to express her sense of his kindness. She ran on—her large features beaming with rapture, her larger bosom expanding with gratitude.

The younger gentleman smiled out of his sleepy-looking eyes ; the elder gazed at her from under his sagacious eye-brows as a fine specimen of a Maltese poodle would do.

“ I told you I should come,” said the former, exulting in the rapid fulfilment of his promise. “ How could I keep away after the treat you gave us last night ? Really, your *Di Piacere* is the most perfect piece of vocalization I ever heard.”

“ How delighted I am ! Nothing can be so gratifying to a true artiste as judicious praise.”

Madame Waverley Montgomery looked so touched when she said this, that more judicious praise became a matter of course.

A very pleasant musical gossip followed as the three sat down together, in the course of which Mr Trigg intimated that a friend of his in Portland Place, no other than the patrician Queen’s Counsel who conducted the case for the prosecution in the late trial, wanted a first-rate

musical instructress for his daughters, and was willing to pay liberally for her services.

Madame was again overflowing with sensibility. Nothing pleased her so much as an engagement to teach in high families, and consequently she was most impressive in her grateful demonstrations.

“You will do me the favour to send me tickets for half a dozen sofa-stalls for your Concert,” said Mr Trigg, taking out his purse.

“O Mr Trigg, really you overpower me with your goodness,” exclaimed the stout lady, with gushing tenderness. As if the benevolent little gentleman could not resist it, he rose from the chintz-covered rosewood chair, and seated himself by her side.

“I hope Creevy is enjoying his holiday, Madame,” pursued Trigg. “When do you expect him home again?”

“It would be hard to say, he is such an uncertain man in his movements. Most probably he will not turn up until the very day he is due at office. He seems to be enjoying himself exceedingly.”

“I am very glad indeed to hear it. Where has he taken himself to for his summer ramble?”

A very natural question, and one easily answered, it might be supposed. Madame Montgomery, however, was not so simple-minded an individual as the little Carbono. She was accustomed to weigh words and consider answers before they were spoken.

Like another Brutus, Trigg paused for a reply. Madame internally hesitated what to say. She thought it would be safest to grant her husband a roving commission, and to treat him as a sort of comet, erratic in his course, and rendered indistinct amidst nebulæ of locality.

“Creevy is making the tour of the Lakes,” answered Madame. “His last letter was dated from—from—Dear a me! I have such a horrid memory for names of places, Mr Trigg.”

“It is the privilege of your sex, my dear Madame; ladies cannot be expected to remember names any more than ages, which they are licensed to forget. So! he is at the Lakes! I am a North-countryman myself, and come from the neighbourhood of Windermere.”

Thereupon followed a charming conversation on the subject of lake scenery, which was a great relief to Madame Montgomery, as it gave her

time to collect herself, and allowed her to escape from furnishing any particulars regarding her husband's movements. Mr Trigg however was not destined to complete his descriptive picture of northern scenery; for in the midst, a German band struck up in the street, opposite the windows. The musical family of Half-Moon Street was familiarly known among the bands, and was frequently honoured with visits of this character.

Mr Trigg's Clarence stood at the door. The hack harnessed to that vehicle evinced the strongest possible objection to those sounds which are represented as soothing to the savage breast. The mare began to plunge violently in the shafts, to back, to rear, and finally to strike out with its hind legs in a very alarming manner.

Trigg, Madame Waverley, and Whiffler flew to the window to discover the cause of the commotion; and no sooner was it seen than Trigg rushed down the stairs, seized the first hat or cap that came to his hand, and sallied forth to the aid of the coachman, who was placed in a most perilous position.

"Gently, gently, Nancy! whey! old girl, poor old lass; quiet, quiet, Nancy," said Trigg,

as he and the by-standers endeavoured to arrest the wild career of the exasperated mare. The bandsmen, alarmed for their own safety, quickly seized their music-stands and moved on to some safer locality. As soon as peace was restored and the mare pacified, Trigg returned to the house and re-entered the drawing-room.

He was met by a scream of laughter from Madame and Whiffler. Something in his personal appearance must have excited their laughter. Trigg's eyes involuntarily turned to the mirror. (How is it that the eyes of gentlemen always turn to a mirror, if there is one in a room? How is it that in the midst of conversation many men will deliberately walk up to the glass, and survey themselves with satisfaction from head to foot, all the while pursuing their subject, as if unconscious of the vain act being perpetrated?)

“Shine out, fair sun, within my glass,
That I may view my shadow as I pass!”

A glance in the mirror revealed to Mr Trigg the cause of Madame Montgomery's laughter. In hurrying out of the house he had crowned himself with a cap lying upon the table in the passage. It was a felt cap with very narrow brim,

and of a decidedly costermonger cut. Trigg himself was startled and amused by the grotesque appearance it gave him. He immediately snatched it off his head, and threw it on the table.

“Where on earth did Creevy raise such an abomination as that?” exclaimed Trigg, examining the article of wear as it lay upon the table.

“You may well ask,” said the lady. “It’s a bit of the Chapel fancy.”

Whiffler was intensely diverted by this remark. Mr Trigg was as completely puzzled.

“The Chapel!” exclaimed Trigg; “Gog and Magog; you don’t mean to say they wear such things as that at—”

“Whitechapel, sir!” interposed Whiffler.

“Oh! I beg your pardon,” said Trigg, with a loud laugh at his own obtuseness; and turning the cap over, he observed the usual maker’s label upon the lining. Wear and grease had defaced the lettering, but enough was legible to tickle Trigg’s fancy amazingly. He read out the following appropriation of Martial:—

“Omnia Castor emit—omnia vendat.” Golgotha—Nut-Case and Roofing Depôt, Whitechapel.

“Who’s your hatter? one might ask; for he’s a spice of wit in him, whoever he may be,” said Trigg. “When we want something in the fancy line we shall know where to go to market! But we really must hurry away, Madame, for I and Whiffler have a hard day’s work before us.”

“When you want anything in the ‘character’ way, you had better come to me, Mr Trigg, and I will fit you out without your going to market. You don’t know what a professional wardrobe we have up-stairs. You see people, the like of us, are obliged to collect properties and costumes for our little Operettas and musical tours. I could turn you out in no time as completely made up for a part as Nathan or May, or any of the costumiers.”

“I am sure you are very obliging, Madame,” said Trigg, preparing to depart; “when I go to a Masque Ball, I shall perhaps take advantage of your kindness; so remember your promise! I have not done much in that way yet; but it’s never too late to mend.”

Mr Trigg took his leave, as they laughingly shook hands. The junior partner of the Lincoln’s Inn firm jumped lightly into the carriage,

followed by his sagacious assistant. Both nodded in recognition of their fair acquaintance's parting signal, and the Clarence was driven away.

Mr Trigg looked out of his half-closed lids with a lively expression, into the intensely sagacious face of Mr Whiffler, while that model of everything venerable rubbed his large hands, placed their palms on his fat knees, and stared back at Mr Trigg with an expression of wisdom Minerva's bird could scarcely have exceeded, under the most encouraging circumstances.

Madame Waverley Montgomery returned to the drawing-room. She considered she had made an addition to her stock of profitable friends. Like all scheming persons, she had not suspected that scheming could be played by other people as well as by herself. On one subject she had been completely on her guard, for she was acquainted with all its details. Not a word had been uttered regarding the law-suit or Clara Harcourt. But she had been betrayed into a mistake, because she was in utter ignorance of an occurrence of far greater importance to her own welfare.

Long and anxiously did Messrs Trigg and

Whiffler consult over the facts which the former gentleman had collected during the last four-and-twenty hours. Trigg had learned much that was valuable, but nothing that was conclusive evidence as to any plot being on foot with regard to Clara Harcourt. Madame Carbono had been extremely communicative, and her husband extremely untruthful. But what of that? The woman was certainly simple-minded and honest. Her evidence in favour of Miss Harcourt would be invaluable. Who was conducting and instigating these proceedings? Trigg was at fault. He might have suspected Creevy. He had called at his house and made all the inquiries he could respecting him. At such a moment of anxiety Creevy was actually absent. That fact certainly told against his complicity in any dishonest plot, if such existed. As far as London was concerned, Trigg was for the moment baffled. He dismissed the murder from his consideration entirely. If anything could be discovered regarding it, Mr Trigg came to the conclusion it would turn up by investigations carried on at Lonsdale. It was better therefore to set out for Launcester without delay, and communicate the facts he had already

culled, to Mr Probyn and Mr Braxstead. This resolution was carried into effect the same evening.

Through the long years the shepherd's feet trod the Bolivian hills, and often on his mountain way must have struck the boulders, which, with the slightest movement, would have discovered the silver treasures of Potosi. A bramble accidentally torn by its roots from the stones to which it clung, revealed the prize that from century to century had been lying close to the hand of man, and man had known it not.

The treasure-trove of two lives had been under the touch of Mr Trigg. He had been treading upon the heels of iniquity. In pursuit, he had been pursuing the right track to overtake the culprit. He had actually come up with him; overtaken him; laid his hands upon his garment; read with his own eyes the sign-post pointing him to the place where conclusive evidence of crime would have been unearthed; and yet Trigg walked over the priceless discovery, passed by, and never suspected it.



CHAPTER III.

JOHN O'GAUNT'S GATEWAY.

"I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light and life and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God;
I hope I do trust in Him. In whom else
Can any trust?"—(*The Cenci*.)



HE Reverend Thomas Cowley had for nearly half a century held the office of Chaplain to Launcester Castle. He was a venerable man; tall, erect, portly; dressed summer and winter in knee-breeches and black silk-stockings (a handsome leg being his particular vanity); his throat swathed in folds of cambric, and his head covered with a shovel hat. Mr Cowley and his friend, Mrs Lawson (an aunt of Miss Lawson of Hampton), were the two "oldest inhabitants of Launcester." They were characters. Not in any grotesque or absurd sense; but characters as far as costume belonging to a former age was concerned; and characters in a mental and

moral sense, regarded and respected by all who knew them—the “all” being everybody in or about Launcester. As an evidence of the retentive character of old northern towns, it may be mentioned that sedan-chairs are not yet extinct in Launcester. A gentleman in a sedan-chair in London streets would probably excite as much surprise now as when the Duke of Buckingham first introduced that vehicle into England in the reign of James I. In Launcester, however, men may yet be seen “like beasts of burden” bearing ancient ladies (costumed in equally ancient fashion) to their evening rubber and dish of tea. Mrs Lawson in her manly straw hat, with a large black rosette in front, her standing collar and white cravat (perfectly masculine in its appearance), her plain bombazine dress and skirt (like a riding-habit), and her Brobdignagian fan, seated in a sedan, and proceeding to her weekly entertainments at the houses of special friends, was a spectacle that would have astonished the gaze of any Southerner. To the Launcestrian people it was a familiar sight; and the old lady, as the sedan swung and bounded along the street, was regarded with peculiar respect by the townsfolk.

Her friend, Mr Cowley, shared with her the homage of the town. The hale and erect old gentleman (who never wore an overcoat in the coldest weather) might be seen every morning at an early hour mounting the Castle-Hill, and entering its gateway to perform the spiritual duties of his office. The prisoners visited and the service read, punctual as clock-work he would descend and proceed to the Gentlemen's Coffee-Room to digest the news of the day. Mr Cowley was a fine specimen of what has been contemptuously called the "old-fashioned school." Commend us to that old-fashioned school, for a fine school it was of scholars, gentlemen, and Christian clergymen, benign in manner and charitable in heart! Every day and age has its howl. One of the howls of the present age is against the clergy of the "old school." Do they deserve to be depreciated in the manner we hear them vulgarly spoken of? Grant that they had a keen appreciation of crusted Port; and considered Dean Aldrich never propounded any truer logic than in those five "major premises" from which he reasoned regarding the friendly bowl:

“Si benè quid memini, causæ sunt quinque bibendi;
Hospitis adventus, præsens sitis, atque futura,
Aut vini bonitas, aut quælibet altera causa.”

Allow that many of them enjoyed a day's sport; and, like the late venerable and beloved Archbishop Harcourt, highly esteemed a canter over the turf on a thorough-bred. Admit that the Vicar and the Squire were excellent companions, and toasted “King and Constitution” in bumpers! And when strictures such as these have spent their force, let us ask ourselves whether in those “old days” the Church knew any such right godly and “painful” pastors as Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man? Whether our age can produce any more true apostle than he was? Was real honour done to the episcopal throne of the Prince Palatine of Durham by any of its tenants in those days? Did learning, scholarship, and letters fade in the hand of our grandfathers? Had charity ceased? There are different ways of estimating men. If you look at them in profile you only see one side of their figures, mental or corporeal. There is always the opposite side, *which is out of sight when our vision is one-sided!* The true and honest way is to look a man full in the face, and examine the

whole man, and not a part of him. When we have the candour to do this, we shall be forced to confess, that the "old school," as it is called, will bear comparison with the "modern" school. There was a vast deal less pretension, and a vast deal more genuine Christianity of feeling and conduct, than is exhibited in the bickering and squabbling of the "parties" with which this age is rife, when so many realize the picture Coleridge drew of men who love their church better than Christianity, and their own opinions better than their church, and who love themselves best of all.

Mr Cowley was one of the old school. Partial to a glass of old wine, enjoyed in the company of an old friend, he delighted in giving his old toast, "Church and Castle." His ecclesiastical costume was old-fashioned; his address and manner were old-fashioned (which means they were dignified, polished, and courteous); his vocabulary was old-fashioned, and he was "oblegged" to his old acquaintance for their acts of kindness; his orthodoxy was old-fashioned, high and dry, as some people called it, with an Arminian, rather than a Calvinistic flavour; his manner of doing duty was old-fashioned. With the in-

tensest admiration for the Church liturgy, he thought infinitely more of good praying than of exhausting preaching. Very simple, very earnest, and very practical in all he had to say from the pulpit, very compact in his sentences, and brief in the duration of his discourses,

“Truth from his lips prevail’d with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff remain’d to pray.”

He was eminently old-fashioned in the manner he said the prayers of the Church; and to his ears the modern slip-shod, untrained, and unemphatic way of rendering the liturgy, was a disgrace both to the clergy who perpetrated it, and to the bishops who laid hands on men without trying and proving whether they were competent to interpret their mother tongue to the people.

“Old-fashioned,” quotha! Those who knew Mr Cowley (and all who knew him loved him), vastly preferred the calm and kindly current of his life to the turbulent fervour and doctrinal storm and tempest which in these times not only blows around, but, woe the day! howls and rages within the Church.

In early life Mr Cowley had played the part of Dominie at the “Free School,” as it was then

called (not having as yet received its title of Royal Grammar School from the Duchess of the Palatinate); and was associated with the culprits of the forms before he took charge of the culprits of the forum. In his time the custom prevailed, then common to various foundation schools, for Freeman's boys to throw with dice for the prizes upon "Cock-penny" day or Shrove Tuesday. Royal Commissioners will find no cock-pits attached to Grammar schools now-a-days;* but time was, when Head-masters' salaries depended in a great measure upon the oblations of school-boys. In acknowledgment of these "cock-pennies" it was the custom for the Master to provide a fighting-cock, which upon Shrove Tuesday was tethered by a piece of string to a peg fixed at one end of the school. Those sons of Freeman, who had given gifts to the master, had the privilege of "Cock-shy;" but if the bird escaped with its life the flight of sticks hurled at it by the alumni, and realized the old saying,

"Gallus in suo sterquilinio plurimum potest,"

then the Master reclaimed his property.

* The cock-pit still exists at Heversham Grammar School.

When this barbarous fashion fell into disuse, Masters' prizes were substituted for the presentation of a Cock, and the Free-scholars, who made the gifts of money, had the privilege of winning prizes, not by the dexterity of their brains, but by the chances of the dice. Those who bore off a prize had the pleasure of seeing the following appropriate inscription upon the title-page of their books :

"In studii hortamen aleæ jactu ferendum proposuit."

Mr Cowley presenting his prizes upon Cock-penny day, might furnish a study for a painter delighting in delineations of the exploded fashions and habits of the olden time. About the period of his Mastership this strange custom, more truly honoured in the breach than the observance, was abolished.

This was the man who, "prompt at every call, watched, and wept, and prayed, and felt" for the doomed and guilty. It was his duty to watch over Blount Tempest, and to direct his thoughts towards another and more solemn assize than the one at which he had lately been condemned.

At the period when the facts here narrated

occurred, extensive internal alterations were taking place within the Castle of Launcester. An enormous growth of population in the county had swelled the number of criminals to be accommodated, not by an increase of crime proportionate to population, but by an advance in the number of gaol-birds beyond the amount of prisoners which the Castle was calculated to hold. New wards and cells became necessary; and extensive castellated buildings were erected within the walls of the ancient fortress. Hence it happened, that, instead of being confined as was usual in the interior of the Castle, one of the chambers of the Gateway tower had been appropriated to the use of Blount Tempest.

As already stated, this Gateway was erected by John o'Gaunt. The centre is pierced by a deeply recessed archway guarded by gates and formerly defended by a porteullis, the grooves of which remain. Upon each side of the archway semi-octagonal towers are projected, which rise to a majestic height, and are crowned with parapets and turrets suited to the warfare of the 14th century. The upper floors of this gateway are divided into three large halls, pierced with loop-

holes. The Guard-rooms on the basement, lighted by arrow-slits, were originally appropriated to the soldiers of the Duke. In later times the upper chambers have been designated "The Pin Box," the "Smuggler's," and the "Constable's Room." The "Smugglers" occupies the central compartment over the Gateway. The "Pin Box" is in the eastern tower, the "Constables" in the western.

These gloomy apartments with walls of immense thickness, and dimly lighted with the straggling rays which make their way through Gothic windows, were secure holdfasts for the desperate characters who carried forward smuggling on the adjoining coast towards the close of the last century. They are approached by well-staircases, and passages in the thickness of the wall, at the back of the Gateway, overlooking the Castle-yard. The "Constables" was used for the imprisonment of Blount. It is a long, narrow chamber, singularly ecclesiastical in its character. At each end there is a window. That which looks out from the front of the Gateway upon Castle Hill and the town of Launcester is extremely narrow, with a pointed, trefoil head. The wall

being pierced to obtain light, narrow towards the window and enlarging in width towards the chamber, forms a recess, provided with seats on either side, finishing with this window, strongly protected by double rows of bars. This recess has the appearance of a small chancel. The chapel-like aspect of the room is sustained by the whole of its architectural features. The roof, a massive oak framework, is precisely such as may be seen in hundreds of village churches. From the opposite walls five ponderous corbels project, supporting huge wall-pieces and Gothic braces, to which the pointed principals are tied, carrying heavy purlins and rafters. The reverse end of the room is occupied by the doorway at the corner, and in the centre another window, which, looking into the Castle-yard, is larger and more decorated than its fellows. It is divided by perpendicular tracery into two lights below and four above, terminating at the head of the depressed arch with trefoil work. As the eye wanders over the cumbrous roof-beams, the roughly dressed stone walls, and the ecclesiastical windows, a stranger might readily imagine he was standing in the precincts of some conventual establishment. But

the mistake would be banished as soon as he saw the dismal prison-door, which guards the entrance. The unwieldy bolts, the heavy lock, the iron-bound jambs bespeak at once the prison-house. Charming, no doubt, to the antiquary's vision this chamber would be, recalling the days when "our dear son, John, King of Castile and Leon," held his Ducal Court here, and Richard de Towneley, Sheriff, summoned by precept the bailiff of Launesdale, to collect aid on occasion of the marriage of the eldest daughter of the Duke, (*racionabile auxilium Johanni Regi Castiliæ et Legionis ad filiam primogenitam maritandam*). From this chamber-window it may be the ladies of the Court looked down upon the Knights and Squires in all their bravery, winding their way up the Castle-hill, and by sound of the trumpet summoning the warder to lower the draw-bridge and to raise the portcullis, to admit a lover and a bridegroom.

The Royal daughter of Castile may have sat in this very room, superintending the preparations of that marriage, towards the sumptuousness of which, Robert Nevile of Melling, and Dacre of Tatham, and the Abbot of Furness, and Margeria

Croft of Yealand, and Adama D'Arey of Silverdale, and all the holders of lands under the Duke in Caton cum Claughton, and Slyne cum Hest, and Skerton, and Urswick, and many another neighbouring township contributed, loyally, at least, if not cheerfully. To Blount, imprisoned in this cold stone room, the floor stone, the walls stone, the window-frames stone, the whole place solitary, bare, and reverberating with hollow sounds as he paced its length, historical association was neither comfort nor entertainment. To him it was, what it was,—a prison.

At the inner-end there is a recess in the wall, forming a sort of cell, seven feet deep, and lighted by a barred window, which looks out into the Castle-yard at the side of the tower, and is at a distance of several feet inside the present flanking walls of the Castle. Originally the "curtain" which ran to the Dungeon-tower and Well-tower was to the rear of this window, and consequently it has always been strongly barred. This recess, converted into a sort of closet, and in modern times divided from the "Constable" guard-room by a partition, served as a sleeping apartment to Blount. Small enough it was. But it was di-

vided from the chilling place in which he had to pass his days ; and moreover there was an air of privacy about it, which he relished and valued. Therein he could avoid the constant observation of the turnkeys and watchers, who, contented to know that he was safe, shrank from intruding upon him.

Gloomily and miserably, from day to day and week to week (during the three weeks of life allotted him), did he pace the "Constable."

"Among the stones I stood a stone.

* * * *

For all was blank and bleak and grey,
It was not night, it was not day.

* * * *

But vacancy absorbing space
And fixedness—without a place,

* * * *

A sea of stagnant idleness."

A thousand times as he trod from end to end of that cell, did he stop at the bars, and strain his sight to catch a glimpse of anything that testified to life and activity without. He could see the windows of houses, the smoke of chimneys, the flight of a bird, and it was a relief to him.

"But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend,
Once more upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye."

It was against his utter isolation that he chafed. The sentence of death had become familiar; and with him, as with most men condemned to die, the agony of death followed immediately upon condemnation; decreasing, and not increasing, as the fatal hour drew nigh.

“Levius solet timere qui proprius timet.”

The public wonder at the calmness and self-possession of men about to suffer. A culprit sleeps soundly the night before he expiates his crime; has to be awakened by a jailor, and enjoys a hearty breakfast before he dies. Strange and marvellous this seems; but it is perfectly natural. To those susceptible of anguish, agony of mind follows their condemnation. Gradually they become used to the fatal anticipation. It grows into a familiar thought. The mental sting has passed, and day by day the condemned become prepared for death. With the innocent man it is in a degree different; but not altogether. In his conscious innocence he wrestles with an unjust condemnation. He is not, like the guilty, resigned, because he knows that he has as much right to life as the free man.

“Thou shalt not see me blush,
Nor change my countenance for this arrest ;
A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.”

Gradually present suffering and coercion thrust into the background the cause, and the awful end. Blount had become familiarized with the anticipation of death. He hoped for life. He prayed for it. He anxiously and earnestly watched every movement, and endeavour to secure a respite, in hope of an ultimate discovery of the murderer, and his own free pardon. But the anticipation of death was not his chief misery. His thoughts were turned towards Mabel. To be robbed of her was to him worse than being robbed of life. To be sundered from her, and except on one or two occasions of special leave, to see her no more on this side eternity ; to have no privacy, no seclusion, and yet to be in himself isolated from everything he loved ; this was a daily dying ; this was misery worse than the degrading suffering which a few moments of torture would end. After pacing with heavy and passionate step backwards and forwards in his cell, he flung himself upon his bed, and began to read—the Bible. A Bible, a porringer, a tin plate, a cup—these, with a stool,

and his truck-bed, were the furniture of his apartment.

The key turned in the ponderous lock; the heavy bolts were drawn, and Mr Cowley entered.

“Good morning, Blount. I am glad to find you so profitably engaged. The hopes which that book gives are the only ones to which any of us can cling. Where are you reading?”

“I was not reading, Mr Cowley. I had only this moment taken up the Bible, and though I was certainly staring at the words, I am afraid those words failed to convey any particular thoughts to my mind. I had better confess at once that my mind was distracted.”

“At such a time as this the less distraction you suffer the better. What has occurred?”

“I am distracted with my own thoughts, sir!”

“I am sorry for it, and sorry for you. Can you not gather confidence from the assurances of which we were speaking yesterday?”

“Mr Cowley, let me be candid with you. For years past my mind has been as firmly convinced regarding certain great truths as any

human mind can be. I believe everlasting life to be a fact."

"To be a truth, Blount; which is saying much more for it than that it is a fact. Fact to-day may be error to-morrow. Truth can never be so. Men often hold firmly to errors which time has consecrated, and persist in regarding them as facts. I allow that a conscientious error is a great homage to truth."

"But there can be no error regarding immortality, Mr Cowley. That sure and certain hope does not rest upon any fact."

"A great many people would be shocked to hear you say so. Nevertheless, you have hit the blot, which will show you the distinction between fact and truth. You hear men constantly striving from the fact of the resurrection to demonstrate the truth of immortality."

"St Paul himself dwells upon that fact. 'If Christ be not risen, his preaching and our faith are vain.'"

"But do you suppose St Paul rested his conviction of the truth of immortality upon the fact of the resurrection? I hope you do not."

"I told you, dear Mr Cowley, that my mind was quite convinced."

"We are not arguing, Blount. This is no time for argument; and neither you nor I could desire it. But I do desire (if you are to be snatched away from us) to know, and be satisfied in my own mind, you can enter eternity with something better than conviction."

"What do you desire me to have?"

"Confidence!—I wish to hear you say in the full spirit of those inspired words, 'I *know* in whom I have believed; and am persuaded.' Forgive an old man, Blount, old enough to be your grandfather, my boy, whose desire as well as his duty brings him here. You have all the head knowledge to discuss such a subject as this. Discussion will profit you little. Remember that passage in Mabel's letter, '*Believe in that rest with me, Blount!*' Will you read me that beautiful bit again? I don't quite remember the words, but it struck me when you read it before, as evincing a most truly Christian spirit."

"Certainly, I will read it;" and he drew from his pocket Mabel's letter, and read the passage,

“He trained me in my small sorrows to repeat those words, ‘Casting your care on Him, for He careth for you.’ And now in my great sorrows, when I ask myself what confidence this is wherein I trust, and utterly trust, even your precious life, that favourite text of his comes flooding my heart with confidence, ‘My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’ Believe in that rest with me, Blount.”

“There, Blount, speaks the woman’s heart. Women have frequently stronger intuitive perceptions of truth than men.”

“Intuition, yes! I have heard it argued that by intuition immortality is known to the religious mind. I have read somewhere, ‘Confidence there is none; and hopeful aspiration is the soul’s highest state.’”

“I hope that is not your opinion?”

“I should find it very hard to make my convictions clear to another person’s mind, though they are clear and satisfactory to myself. I am not quite certain, were I strictly to test my mind, if I should not find intuitive apprehension the preponderating element in what I should call my convictions regarding immortality.”

“You will find a metaphysical basis to religion as unsatisfactory as a supposed reliance upon an historical Christ.”

“I do not think mine is metaphysical. Cer-

tainly, the satisfaction of my mind is derived from internal, and not external, reliances. Perhaps you will be better pleased with me for saying this."

"I shall be best pleased the nearer I see you approach to scriptural truth, 'grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.' 'Knowing what is the riches of the glory of this mystery' * * '*which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*' You may have convictions, or, as you say, intuitive apprehensions regarding a future life, and yet be none of Christ's, for you must admit there is a great difference between the hunting-fields of the Indian, the Paradise of the Mahomedan, the Valhalla of the Goth, and the place prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our forerunner."

"Ah, sir, it is a great mystery, and what the apostle shows *is* a mystery, and not its unravelling."

"Pardon me! If I understand the teaching of the apostle, the aim and object of that teaching, it is to make men perceive the *future hopes of the soul can be discerned only by the soul it-*

self. No metaphysical aids will help us; and no historical religion will implant them in our hearts."

"Is not such discernment very nearly related to what I called intuition? I admit the force of all you say regarding fact and truth. It had not occurred to me before, but I feel its force. For myself, I *discern* immortality."

"Why? or rather, How?"

"Primarily, I am certain, because I intuitively perceive myself to be implicated in God. Some sayings come with more force to one mind than to another. To my mind no words have ever carried such truth and meaning as those of our Saviour, 'He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him.' My intuitive apprehension of truth is confirmed by that assertion, and, excuse my using the language when I say had those words been uttered by any other lips, they would have approved themselves to me logically true, as the necessary result of reasoning from the fact of creation, admitting the premise that creation is the procreation of a Divine Life which we call God."

“None but an atheist (if there ever was such an individual, which I very much doubt), would deny you that fulcrum.”

“Grant it me, and the world, spiritually, not only can be, but must be moved from it.”

“Then you do believe that God’s Spirit pervades all things?”

“I do believe, Mr Cowley, in the fullest sense of the language, that in Him we live, and have our being. It is because I believe, that I am convinced of immortality. I adopt the words, ‘He that believeth hath the *witness* in himself.’”

“It is an infinite relief to my mind to hear you speak in this way, looking death in the face.”

“Death! No, sir, Immortality! We are set face to face. I do not believe in death, Mr Cowley. I agree with Longfellow,

‘There is no death! what seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call death.’

Amidst confounding terms, there is none so pernicious and offensive, to my mind, as the vulgar use of that word. Men use the horrid phrase and

signify thereby a state. It means no more than a process."

"Well, well, it matters very little what term we use. I suppose we all mean the same thing when we speak of death."

"If I were quite sure of that," said Blount, "I should not take such exception to the word. You will smile at my animosity to this combination of five letters, but it clashes with my theory. Life is more than a gift from God."

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," observed Mr Cowley.

"True, sir! and that, as I think, is death, nothing more nor less than dearticulation. It is merely shuffling off the mortal coil. That which is taken away is only removed from one scene of action to another; but the life itself was immortal retrospectively, as well as prospectively."

"I confess, my young friend, you have the advantage of me. I do not clearly follow you, or perceive your drift."

"What I mean is, that life is more than a donation. God does more than give life. He gives Himself. *A Father communicates his own life to his offspring.*"

“You are speaking of Him in his paternal character; ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’”

“Precisely; and in the sense that we all ‘live in Him.’ Our life is a part of His life! How then can there be any death for us? Do you remember those lines in Adonais?

‘Dust to the dust, but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change unquenchably the same.’

To my mind it is logically absurd to admit such a phantom idea as death, unless we are prepared to believe God himself is finite, instead of being from everlasting to everlasting. Admit God is our Eternal Father, and a perishing creature is a contradictory term. When I say that I believe in God, you will now understand how much (as I think) of necessity flows from that primary article of human faith. What else shall I call this, sir, but my conviction?”

“I would rather give it a higher title, Blount! You remember where it is said, ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are children of God.’ That is what I called just now the discernment of the soul. But the

practical effect of such discernment upon your own heart, is my great anxiety. Don't mistake me. I know Immortality is often urged upon the minds of people as a prudential good. The 'argumentum ad hominem,' the polemical 'quid pro quo,' I admit, reduces religion to a nice calculation of interest with selfish minds. I see, gladly and thankfully, you have no such thought. I gather from what you say, that you regard immortality as a purely independent truth—the necessary consequence, or rather, part of the creation of life itself. You consider life involves infinity because it is itself involved in the life of the Infinite. This, admitting it to be true, is after all abstract."

"I would much rather it were so, I assure you, Mr Cowley. I should despise myself if it were otherwise," remarked Blount. "I contemplate the truth independently of any consequences, or influences upon myself."

"But, my dear boy, you must not disengage yourself from, or leave unconsidered, your own state, as an heir of such immortality. To pass away from this world, and to go into the presence of God—"

“—Is not for me to be more present with Him” (interrupted Blount) “than I am this instant.”

“Probably not,” pursued Mr Cowley, “but it is to be called to account for your stewardship. I will not again question you regarding this horrible crime of which I firmly believe you innocent. You are, however, on the very brink of the grave. Nothing has been revealed. Prejudice, public opinion, as it is called, is against you. Your birth and antecedents make the country look jealously at the conduct of the Government; and I confess I do not see the chance of a respite. You have no right to build upon any hopes of life.”

“Life! I think you misconceive the individual value I set upon it, Mr Cowley. For my uncle’s sake, for the honour of our name, and for—for—” Blount’s voice trembled, and he dashed away the tears which rose despite his efforts to control them.

At length he continued, “Let me be a man, and not play the child. It is when I think of him—and of her—of her—of my poor, broken-hearted Mabel, that my spirit breaks down. Oh, Mr

Cowley! Mr Cowley! I would die readily and willingly, if only that act, that process of death, would reveal my innocence. I have no fear of death. Death will be my freedom!"

"You speak assuredly!"

"Because I feel assured!"

"It is the greatest consolation for me to hear you say so. You can imagine (without my giving it expression) how solemn is the sense of responsibility which now presses upon me. I shrink, Blount, from being obtrusive, but my duty bids me inquire, whether—"

"Stay, Mr Cowley! You have a professional duty to fulfil, and a professional question to ask. Unlike some men in your profession, who bruise the spirits of the dying with their sledge-hammer piety, you would not handle the reed of faith roughly, nor trample upon the flax of life, even though the flame of goodness may have smouldered. I think I appreciate you."

"I have no need of appreciation," said Mr Cowley. "Can you relieve me from anxiety, and from the sense of compulsion to catechise you, by telling me your mind is fully prepared for the great change, which creeping

nearer with the creeping hours leads you to your Lord? Do you trust to God's mercy; and repose with confidence upon that everlasting Rest which He has promised, who said, 'My peace I give unto you?'"

"Spare me and yourself further words upon that subject, I beg of you, Mr Cowley; and accept my assurance in the fullest significance of the terms, which you as a Christian can apply to them—I trust to mercy; and I am at peace."

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," said Mr Cowley, very solemnly, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Blount started from the bedside on which he had sat, and moaning bitterly, paced up and down his prison, vainly struggling to subdue the tempest of emotion which Mr Cowley's quotation had raised within him. The composure he had imposed upon himself up to that moment entirely forsook him. Returning to the little chamber, and dropping down again upon the bed, he leant his head upon the shoulder of the old clergyman, and sobbed aloud.

“—Slight withal may be the things which bring
Back on the heart the weight which it would fling
Aside for ever ; it may be a sound,
A tone of music, summer's eve, or spring,
A flower, the wind, the ocean, which shall wound,
Striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound.

Mr Cowley waited patiently until Blount should recover himself, to learn the explanation of this unexpected ebullition of feeling.

The sound of a text had unmanned him ! The earliest love of his life, with all its tender memories, had suddenly been called up from the past. The past became for the moment, as it will eventually be for ever, the present. “Memory is immortal ;” and, like immortality, annihilates time.

Lord Bacon says of love, “This passion hath its floods in the very times of weakness, which are great prosperity and great adversity.” In his great adversity this flood had come in upon Blount's soul. His early love had been love of his mother. “*L'âme humaine est un clavier où résonnent toutes les émotions ; mais la joie n'y rend qu'un son rapide, sans écho et bientôt oublié tandis que la douleur y laisse sa vibration profonde et éternelle !*” The key-note of his

affection, that affection which is the most profound and eternal where it is really felt, had been struck, and the vibrations of sorrow wrung his heart.

* * * *

We may have friends, few at the best, but we have only one mother! Merciful the Providence which has ordained that a bad mother shall be a rare and, wherever seen, an odious spectacle.

Whatever the sins or follies of our kind, the mother's heart tenderly broods over her offspring, and instinctively yearns to rear the child in goodness and in innocence.

Whatever the ties, the associations, or the occupations of life, the man worthy of being called a man, but with a heart like a child in this sacred affection, reverts to his mother's love, recalls his early home, and blesses the influence which instilled the highest, purest, most generous principles of his conduct. That influence, like a guardian-angel standing in the way, often brandishes the sword of conscience, and turns him back from the road of evil. That influence, like a pillar of fire, illumines the night-time of life's

sorrows and trials, leading him onward and beckoning him forward when his steps falter and his pathway seems obscured.

* * * *

“You knew my mother, Mr Cowley,” said Blount, nerving himself to speak. “If ever a saint passed away from earth to God, she was one. I am sure you do not cherish the hard feelings which too commonly sunder Protestants and Catholics. I have been brought up in my father’s religion, but you are aware my mother belonged to the old, old faith. As far as I am conscious, the first thing I ever learned to say by heart was that very Psalm which you have quoted. She taught it me. Unconsciously your lips recall it. The world would call this a happy accident. It is no accident! In that communion between earth and heaven which our Creed teaches, there is tender consolation in the belief that a mother’s spirit, like a guardian angel, hovers round her child. The words on your lips are invested with associations so numerous, they seem to bring my entire childhood into review. I was a restless child, and sleep came to me reluctantly. Many a night did my mother sit by my bedside

and woo me to repose, with the legends and traditions which she had herself learned from the peasantry of Clare, in which part of Ireland one branch of her family had for centuries been seated. From my window overshadowed with a tall sycamore (through which the wind used to sing in *Æolian strains*, strange unearthly songs), many and many an evening we have looked forth together upon the winding river, as the moon-beams played over the silvery Laune, and with my head resting upon my mother's breast, her fingers playing with my curls, she has mesmerized my brain and lulled me into sleep! Sometimes on summer nights the old church bells would ring plaintive peals, floating musically upon the water, and rebounding with echoes from the distant vale! The sadly pleasing strain always seemed to carry her thoughts heavenward. In the hush of eve, between the changes of those pealing bells, my young imagination was often so wrought upon, I fancied I could hear the flutter of angelic wings moving in the air, as if celestial spirits were hovering round my mother, and forming upon their outstretched pinions, a ladder, whose ascending steps wafted her soul upwards to God.

“‘Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.’
I see her sitting at the window corner, her large, dark Irish-eyes fixed with intensity of feeling, and her lips murmuring snatches from the Litany of Jesus, or some of the hymns of the Church, suggested by the quoted passage.

“One special night, I remember, when she was talking of the ‘rod’ of chastisement and the ‘staff’ of confidence being equally ministers for our ultimate comfort, she told me a legend familiar to the people living about the Abbey of Clare, a picturesque old cruciform ruin, with tall, commanding tower, and transepts still rich in decorated tracery, whose ivy-mantled walls and lengthly nave overhang the river flowing from Ennis towards the Shannon. You know how partial the old Catholic families are to burying their dead within the crumbling remains of the churches and abbeys, which were the pride of their ancestors and the shrines of their faith before the cannon of ‘Crummel’ the Regicide (as the peasants denominate Cromwell) spread desolation through their land. For long centuries my mother’s forefathers had been buried beneath those transepts; and it was within those ruins she

learned the legend of the 'Staff of Jesus.' It seems St Patrick was once on his way to Rome, when he stopped at some island in the Mediterranean, where he met with a number of very old people, and others who were all young and active. The population consisted solely of the youthful and the aged. On inquiry the Saint found the young and vigorous were the fathers of the old and decrepit. The island had always been hospitable to strangers. A pilgrim with a staff had once arrived there, and was welcomed, housed, and fed. On departing he revealed himself as Christ, and left behind him his staff, with an injunction that when it should hereafter be claimed by a Saint, called Patrick, it was to be delivered to him. Meanwhile, those who revered the Staff of Jesus were preserved in youth and vigour; those who despised it, grew infirm and bent with age. Upon the poetic feeling of that strange legend, my mother loved to dwell. She would smile at the foolish story, and yet the Staff of Jesus giving eternal youth to those who reverence him, was a truth, beautiful and precious to her, which she brought forth out of the mind's crucible, purified from the dross of legend.

The Staff of Jesus comforting us, recalls to me a favourite passage from the *Lorica* of St Patrick, which I have heard her repeat over and over again in the Celtic tongue, on one of those evenings when the stars seemed listeners, and the moon to be brightened at the sound, and the pealing bells rejoicing to hear the words,—

‘Christ with me, Christ before me,
 Christ behind me, Christ within me,
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left,
 Christ in the fort,
 Christ in the chariot-seat, .
 Christ in the poop.’ *

-
- * “Christ when I am in the fort—at home.
 Christ when I am in the chariot—abroad and travelling
 by land.
 Christ when I am in the poop—on board ship travelling
 by water.”

The close resemblance of this petition to the clause of the Litany, which prays for the preservation of all those who travel by land or by water, is curious and striking. The above verse is taken from the *Fedh Fiadha*, or *Lorica* of St Patrick. A *Lorica* was a sacred hymn, by the repetition of which the person repeating was supposed to be protected, as by a breastplate, from the attacks of spiritual foes. In the learned *Life of St Patrick*, Apostle of Ireland, by the Rev. Dr Todd, a translation of this *Lorica* and its history are given, pp. 426—428.

“Was it merely a ‘happy accident’ which caused you, dear Mr Cowley, to quote those sacred words?”

“I confess,” said Mr Cowley, “I had no object or forethought in quoting them. Their peculiar applicability to the present moment I presume suggested them.”

“How can that be? If you were beating about for an applicable text, you must have exercised forethought, which you say you did not, and I not only believe your assertion, but I *know* you did not.”

“You know it!” echoed Mr Cowley with surprise. “How could you know?”

“Because it was my mother’s soul which spoke through you to me.”

Mr Cowley smiled.

“You smile, dear sir, at a young man’s fancy, as you would call it! When my father was Minister at Florence, he heard this story from his physician. A patient with whom he had often held arguments regarding immortality, was dying. Suddenly, and in his last moments, he turned to the doctor and said, ‘I know.’ The physician, supposing he was alluding to his treatment, con-

tradicted him; and told him he knew better what was necessary for his patient. The dying man persisted his doctor did not know, and repeated that he himself *had not known*; but now, he said, '*I know*,' and died.* What he knew, Mr Cowley, is what I know; and what your experience must have taught you many a Christian man sees and knows when the world is receding from his sight, and a grander vision is opening upon his eyes,—”

“I admit, Blount, I have heard of wonderful realizations, on the part of dying men, of scenes or visions imperceptible to those around their beds. I have heard of them assuring their surrounding friends they recognized the presence of ‘a cloud of witnesses;’ and in a sort of ecstasy stretching forth their hands to invisible messengers, waiting to conduct them to another world!”

—“Do you believe that to be fancy, sir?”

Mr Cowley hesitated.

“I see you hesitate,” pursued Blount, “and I

* This singular incident has been lately retold in the “Diary of a Lady of Quality,” upon the authority of Lord Delamere, who had it narrated to him in Florence by the physician alluded to.

am sure it is not that you reject such evidence, but you do not wish to encourage me in anything which you fear may possibly be an erroneous fancy. I repeat my words, 'I know!' At every instant we are like voyagers, a plank between us and eternity; but there are supreme moments when we find the plank slipping away, and ourselves in solitude launching forth into the great deep. It is well that at such moments we should *see*, we should *know*, we should have revelations made to our spiritual apprehensions. Why we believe that God made truths manifest to men in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, and doubt His disposition to do so in the reign of Queen Victoria, perplexes me. Protestants pride themselves upon their 'reasonable faith.' I am afraid the tendencies of the present age are to make that negative word, Protestant, a convertible term with Rationalist. Certainly the bias has been to reduce religion to the dry bones of a logical formula, and to loose the flesh and blood and vigour of a lively, spiritual faith. That 'slippery highway to Deism' (as the Catholic regards it), in flying from superstition, has rushed into the embrace of materialistic dogmas, and *practically* disowned the highest

of all truths, that our world is constantly in connection with and subjection to the spiritual world."

"My dear boy," interposed Mr Cowley, "you are hard upon us Protestants; and perhaps I should be justified in suspecting early associations have given your mind an unsuspected tenderness towards Romish teaching."

"I do assure you, Mr Cowley, you are quite mistaken," Blount rejoined. "And to prove it to you I will quote the words of Theodore Parker. I am sure you will not suspect *him* of any Popish proclivities. Speaking of men who think as I do upon this subject, he approves their entertaining 'an idea wider and deeper than Catholic or Protestant, namely, that God still inspires men as much as ever, that He is imminent in spirit and in space.' This imminence is *my* 'idea.' But what do you honestly believe is the opinion of the Protestant world generally? You must confess any *evidence* to that effect would by the mass of people be scoffed at. The lips which would talk glibly of Revelation in a church, would regard as a hoax the assertion that in this year of grace there could be any spiritual revelation.

We must make our choice between the reasoning of materialists and the spiritual apprehensions and asseverations of holy men in every age of the Church, when we talk of revelation. May I ask you to define that term? What does it mean?"

Mr Cowley was not prepared to be taken to task in this fashion, upon his own ground. He replied, "You must not ask me questions to entangle me in my talk, when we both understand the signification of the term. It is a communication to man from heaven of sacred truths or of heavenly facts, otherwise unknown to men, and mysteries."

"That," said Blount, "is your Christian platform; and upon it every Christian takes his stand. We believe such revelations have been made. The Bible is from page to page a history of such communications made by God to men. Does God change? Is His character altered? Is the Christian revelation a full stop to the Divine sentences of imparted truths? Can you for one moment entertain the supposition that the Gospel snaps the links of communication between earth and heaven?"

“Certainly not! Our Master’s promise was that His Church should be sustained by the offices of the Spirit.”

“Yes! and in the direct operations of that Spirit upon men, we Christians profess to believe. But the instant any one realizes it, points to it as a personal experience, and recognizes its brooding presence and active interposition in the events or accidents of his life, he is regarded as a visionary, as the victim of fancy! At the tribunal of sensual judgment every self-constituted, social Festus proclaims him mad. His spiritual experience is scorned as a ‘story of the supernatural,’ and by a process of reasoning which I admit is consistent, it is rejected in the same way that the miracles of our Lord are rejected—a miracle is an impossibility, ergo, it is untrue. The slaves of Matter, who call themselves Wise-Men, assume to pronounce what is Absolutely True or Untrue, by deductions drawn from their own Manifestoes upon the Possible and Impossible, without condescending to the examination of facts; although one to whose opinion they might defer, has said, ‘A presumptuous scepticism, which rejects facts without examination of their truth, is in some respects even more

injurious than an unquestioning credulity.’* I confess I am not prepared to submit my ideas of the dealings of God with His creature, to the arbitrary restrictions which rationalists and materialists endeavour to impose upon *Him*. I would rather err in the opposite extreme, and accept the visions and ecstasies of saints, virgins, and martyrs, for positive fact, than I would regard the world as nothing more than a watch (with certain compensating action, wound up and kept going by some Divine mechanist, who holds the key), worked by the revolution of wheels and by arbitrary motions, the ingenious inventor exercising no guidance and control. Are we not told the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal?”

“Profit! yes!” said Mr Cowley; “but the profit there spoken of is a beneficial use of any gifts, not simply for our own purposes, but for the good of those around us! Do not fall into a common error of textists, who fancy they throw their adversaries in a polemical wrestle, by quoting words with a general meaning, and giving them a particular application. The words

* Humboldt’s “Cosmos.”

you quote had reference to a state of affairs in the Church at Corinth, and to Divine energy awakening a slumbering world (with which that Church found itself instinct), under an exceptional condition of the *body politic*, peculiar to the apostolic age. Diversities of gifts, exhibiting extraordinary insight and extraordinary power, were at that time manifested. Such manifestations ceased with the age to which they belonged."

"But, sir," said Blount, "we do not cease to hear of them with the apostolic age. During the early centuries of the Church (the first four especially), and in mediæval days, we read of occurrences in the works of contemporary authors, that are certainly evidences of extraordinary, not to call them miraculous, 'gifts.'"

"Are they true?" observed Mr Cowley, interrogatively.

"Nay, nay, my dear sir! are they untrue? I will not undertake the *onus probandi*. There can be no doubt the Church of Rome believes them to be true, and she is the best judge of matters which occurred within her own experience!"

“And which have led to an immense amount of idle superstition,” the chaplain retorted, buckling on his Protestant armour. “What the Church of Rome believes or disbelieves does not affect me. But I am certain of one thing, which is, that if the traditions and records of such manifestations of spiritual power in the early and middle ages of the Church were positively true, they would be widely different in their character from such ‘gifts’ as those referred to by the Apostle. Remember he is addressing the inhabitants of a Grecian city. In dwelling upon the unity of a body with many members, he insists that the several members with their several gifts should contribute to the oneness and cohesion of the Corinthian Church. He seems in writing to a mixed Grecian population, to have in his mind the *πολιτεία* of Plato, an idea that would be appreciated in such a city as Corinth. But in the co-operation of the members of this Christian *πόλις*, or, as I called it, body politic, you must remember St Paul’s purpose is to show, that, as all are members of that one body, so those members are not to say to the body, ‘What have I to do with thee?’ but are to co-operate for mutual support,

that there should be no schism in the body, the members having care one for another. In addition to this it is evident these members were universally endowed with gifts. There were diversities of gifts; but the self-same spirit *divided to every man* severally as he willed. Do you not see the vast difference between the apostolic and post-apostolic ages? The gifts St Paul speaks of were universal. The miraculous manifestations men read of in the middle ages were particular and individual. The gifts of the Church of Corinth are enlarged upon by the Apostle, not as marvels and wonders, but as instruments of the most practical utility to the combined Corinthian community. The manifestations of Church record are simply marvels, related of individuals, of relics, of visions, and dreams, and such like, exercising no beneficial effect whatever upon the community of the Church. It is not for me to presume to shorten the arm of God, or to pronounce that the miraculous stories told of Fathers and Confessors and Saints are all fables; but we must exercise common sense (if we possess it), and I, for my part, should regard any account of supernatural visitation, exactly as the Apostle

regarded the gifts of the Corinthian Church. What benefit on the body politic, on the Christian community, do they confer? It seems to me the miraculous powers attributed to relics, and the marvels of monkish legends, far from having a beneficial, have had a most baneful influence upon the minds of uneducated people, in nurturing one of the worst diseases of the human mind—superstition.”

Blount paused and considered. He felt himself unable to handle a subject with which Mr Cowley was conversant and he was not.

“After all,” he presently remarked, “you do not, as you say, shorten the arm of God, or deny that his Spirit may work, not only within us, but openly without us, even in these days.”

“On the contrary, as a Christian, I believe it not only may, but continually does. If Christianity is true, I am bound to believe it. The Church of Christ is under the immediate guidance and comfort of the Spirit. Every Christian knows that, and *no one is a Christian who does not know it* in his personal experience. Let me remind you of your own words. You said just now, ‘the

satisfaction of my mind is derived from internal and not external reliances.' Believe me, the Spirit within a man is the true expositor of the power of God."

"I frankly admit it, sir," said Blount; "but you will also allow the value of external evidences; and that the sacred record is throughout a history of the way in which Divine influence has been palpably exercised to convince the minds of men, even through their senses."

"Of course, I admit it!"

"And that it is not only reasonable, but natural to suppose such influence will consistently and continuously be exercised, according to the plan adopted for thousands of years gone by."

"The plans of God, Blount! How can I judge what His plans may be?"

"We argue regarding the future from our knowledge of the past," replied Blount. "We believe the sun will rise to-morrow, because we know it rose yesterday. I did not mean to speak presumptuously of the plans of Providence, but I believe there is no variableness nor shadow of turning with Him; and therefore from age to age,

and century to century, until time shall cease, I also believe that He who manifests His power over nature, as He rides upon the storm and shoots forth His lightnings like arrows, will continue to reveal His power to man, both by internal and external operations of His Spirit, according to His will and pleasure, in ways which may be extremely unacceptable to the prone views of materialists and the fond opinions of ‘philosophers,’ whose professed science is the childish confession of nescience, perpetually dogmatizing on the laws which they are patronizingly pleased to lay down for Him who is past their finding out. It was in the Spirit of God that matter had its beginning, and subject to spiritual power I believe it can only exist. I would rather err on the side of a spiritual government than of the iron ordinances of material machinists. Bossuet never spoke before the great Louis with greater boldness or more true eloquence than when he said, ‘*Les croyez-vous à l’épreuve de vos frivoles raisonnements et de vos fausses railleries ? Murmurez et raillez tant qu’il vous plaira, le Tout-Puissant a ses règles, qui ne changeront ni pour vos murmures, ni pour*

vos bons mots; et il saura bien vous faire sentir, quand il lui plaira, ce que vous refusez maintenant de croire.' ”

Mr Cowley having his round of duties to perform, was obliged to conclude the conversation, and leave Blount to his solitary meditations.





CHAPTER IV.

“THE 12TH OF AUGUST—HOW THEY BEAT THE
COVERS FOR THE GAME.”

MR TRIGG had taken up his quarters at Durham-Massey. From that basis of operations he conducted the siege in which he was appointed commander-in-chief. Jacob Price and the Priory were the first objects upon which he concentrated his fire. Old Jacob was made to go over his story upon the spot. He showed the exact point along the road behind the Priory which he had reached upon the night of the murder, and the casement from which he swore he had seen the two men drop, when they made off, as he stated, into the shrubbery and wood behind the ruins.

“Now, Whiffler,” said Trigg, “just you step down to yonder window alongside the Massey

Chapel, while I and Jacob and Hargreaves stay here. Let us see for ourselves how things would look, as Price describes them ! ”

Whiffler strode over the grass, and took up his position.

“ That will do,” shouted Trigg, when he had arrived at the place indicated ; “ stand still and let us have a look at you.”

The practised model threw himself into position and faced about.

“ Look at Whiffler, Jacob, and tell me how he’s dressed.” Jacob could see Whiffler distinctly. He described his clothes, his beard, his attitude.

“ Good,” said Trigg, satisfied that Price’s eye-sight was sufficient to serve the purpose of seeing all he had sworn to.

The party stood contemplating the figure of Whiffler, while Hargreaves the gamekeeper and Price communicated to Mr Trigg the various facts connected with their personal experiences on the night of the tragedy.

“ I believe it was some days subsequent to the murder that your evidence was first taken ? ”

“ It war welly nigh a week,” Price replied.

“You knew nothing of his evidence at the time, did you, Hargreaves?”

“No, sir.”

“And you never examined the shrubbery and wood?”

“No, sir. I never thought o’doing so.”

“Then you ought to have thought of it,” said Trigg, sharply, and to Hargreaves’ discomposure. But as it was Hargreaves who had apprehended Blount Tempest in the ruins, and had been most positive of his culpability, it had never occurred to him that Jacob’s assertion was worthy of consideration.

“Holloo, Maester Trigg, what the deil’s tak the mon?” exclaimed Jacob Price, highly diverted by the attitude into which they all saw Whiffler throw himself, and by the gesticulations wherewith he seemed to be apostrophizing the walls of the Priory! The next instant he summoned Mr Trigg to his side, with a shout that made the valley re-echo.

Whiffler had discovered marks upon a wall, which appeared to have been recently made by the scraping of the sole of a foot against the stones. A close investigation of the wall and

window ensued. Trigg despatched a messenger to summons Miss Massey and Mrs Lawson, and to request they would bring a magnifying-glass with them.

On their arrival the stones were as closely scrutinized as the arterial system of a frog under a binocular microscope. Luckily the hand of time had rendered important assistance to the investigators, for the crumbling, efflorescent surface of the masonry was admirably prepared to register the slightest mark or scratch that might be made upon it. It was palpable that some person or persons had dropped from the casement above, and in so doing had scraped the wall. Not only so, but the impressions of nails were palpable, scored with white lines into the stone.

Whiffler exhibited intense delight. He had made a hit, a palpable hit, and congratulated himself that he had at length found the end of the thread which might lead them out of the labyrinth of mystery.

"This proves," said Mr Trigg, "the correctness of my remark to you, Hargreaves! That shrubbery and wood ought to have been examined long ago. It was a great oversight. What was

not done at the time must be done now. You are best acquainted with the grounds, so I will leave it to you to direct our movements."

Behind Lonsdale Priory the ground rapidly ascends, forming a steep bank, skirting the valley, and overhanging the course of the Laune. The river passes under a portion of the buildings, which enclose it with a tunnel of massive arched masonry. Above this tunnel the outline of the Prior's house can be distinctly traced, with its Guestin-Hall, its various offices and chambers and Refectory. Curious openings in the crowns of several arches exist, showing how the Monks could draw water from the clear trout-stream below, without leaving the premises. The banks slope down to the walls of the Priory, and in some places the external face of the building is buried for several feet in the foot of the hill. It may naturally be concluded that in such close contiguity to a river, the turf is mossy, and the hill-sides, being filled with springs, luxuriant in foliage. Any one attempting to escape from the back of the Priory would naturally shape his course towards the hill, so as to be speedily hidden among the shrubs and trees. Mr Trigg and Har-

greaves concluded it was useless to examine the valley, which being broad and open, and leading towards the Hall, would certainly be avoided. On escaping from the Massey Chapel, it was agreed by the whole party, that the fugitives would make for the hill, across the stunted walls and remains of the Priory. In true sporting fashion, Hargreaves determined to examine the covers. It was the 12th of August; but no gun rang that day over the moors above Lonsdale, throughout the Massey property. The occupation of gamekeeper and assistants was gone. The grouse were free to enjoy the heather unmolested; and no danger threatened the young partridge among the Priory woods on the coming 1st of September. Colonel Massey had been a keen sportsman, and his preserves were carefully kept. If any one had passed through the shrubbery above the Priory and the wood overhanging it, there was every probability that traces of footsteps would be discovered, particularly at the back of the wood, where a wicker-fence and deep ditch divided it from the adjoining moorland. When the beaters had been collected, they were despatched in two gangs, one north, the other south, with

directions to traverse the hill and examine every inch of it carefully, until they met together above the ruins. Hargreaves, Mr Trigg, Whiffler, and the ladies arranged to work upwards, from the ruins, towards the moor. In this order the search began. The grass-grown floors of the Priory told no tale. They had been so often visited, and were impressed with foot-prints in so many places, that it was useless wasting time there. So, with scarcely a glance at the Priory, Hargreaves and Mr Trigg proceeded to the shrubbery. It was not long before the practised eye of the game-keeper, accustomed to track the steps of poachers, detected the prints of boots upon the moss, and in various places, the turf having given way under the pressure, slides in the chalk rubble were traced, where the feet of persons ascending had slipped downward owing to the unstable footing. The investigation became intensely exciting. The ardour of Whiffler (apparently restored from venerable age to the vigour of youth), was obliged to be restrained, so fearful was Mr Trigg of the most trifling evidence being injured by precipitancy. Luckily for him and for his cause, the season of the year was altogether favourable, weeks of fine,

sunny weather had preceded the 12th of August. No thunder-showers had fallen ; no heavy rains had descended to wash away the tracks, as they inevitably would have done.

From point to point the assertion of Jacob Price received fresh testimony in its favour, until the fence was reached. There Hargreaves' keen observation speedily led him to the conclusion that two persons must have retreated from the wood. The opposite bank showed the fence had been jumped by some one who had cleared it at a bound ; while the crushed condition of the fence itself proved it had been scrambled over by another person, untrained to athletic sports. Arrived at the edge of the moorland, further search was abandoned.

Watchers having been posted in permanent charge of the wood, and precautions taken to preserve every mark from molestation, the party sauntered back towards the Abbey. Arrived at the Priory, they seated themselves among the ruins to discuss the remarkable discoveries they had made.

“ Well, Mr Trigg,” eagerly inquired Mabel, “ what do you think of the aspect of affairs now ? ”

“Humph!” exclaimed Trigg, with irascible pokes of his stick, making little burrows into the grass, “it is not always discreet to speak our thoughts. A lawyer, Miss Massey, like a diplomatist, should know how to hold his tongue. May the firm of Probyn, Shirley, and Trigg pardon the imprudence of my confessing, in my humble opinion, the defence has made a mess of it! It was a great mistake to treat that old man’s evidence with so little consideration.”

“What would you have had done?”

“Precisely what we have been doing this morning, when I am afraid it may be too late to effect any good.”

“Oh, do not say so, Mr Trigg, if you really think this evidence may lead to a discovery.”

“It may, or it may not, Miss Massey; at present no one can foresee. It would be very poor satisfaction to prove the innocence of a dead man.”

“Could we not arrest the carrying out of the sentence? If the Secretary of State knew evidence had been discovered likely to prove the innocence of Blount, he would at least postpone the day of execution!”

“Certainly he would,” said Mr Trigg, “but

we must first of all show we are in possession of such evidence. Up to the present moment we have nothing to produce."

While this conversation was carried on, the lawyer's eyes wandered over the ruins not only in admiration, but in pleasurable recollection of the long-vanished years when they were familiar to him; when the North-country lad little dreamt of becoming a lawyer and taking up his abode in London.

"I cannot look at this lovely dale and on those old walls," observed Mr Trigg, addressing himself especially to Miss Lawson, "without remembering your relative and my kind patron, Dr Lawson. I believe I am indebted to him for the good fortune with which I have been blessed. Dear old doctor! what a triumvirate he and Dr Clifford and Mr Cowley were! When Mr Cowley was Head-Master at Launcester, he was fond of recommending his 'good boys' (as he called them) to the notice of Dr Lawson. The old school turned out some fine specimens of strong-brained Northerners in old Cowley's time. Sewell, now Head of his College, was a pupil of Mr Cowley's. A great man is Dr Sewell! A walking Encyclo-

pedia, I assure you. When he was a boy old Cowley quickly found out the stuff he was made of, and pushed him forward, and got friends to take an interest in him. University Dons look as if they were born in caps and gowns, and wore bands instead of bibs when they were babies. I wonder what they were fed on? Those lanky, spindle-shanked book-worms, with no more stomach than a frog-eating Frenchman, perhaps took to the Frogs of Aristophanes for spoon-feeding, and chirped *Βρεκεκεκεξ κοῦξ κοῦξ* instead, "One, two, come buckle my shoe." If Sewell was nurtured with geometrical conics and experimentalized on his monthly nurse to define a parabola, it must be allowed his early training has agreed with his constitution wonderfully. I suppose Mr Cowley never had to prove to him the mechanical advantage of a machine called the birch-rod, or to define Force, and exhibit the Resultant where lines of action meet.

"Professor Megatherium Bowen sat on the same form with Sewell, and put together a good deal of his mental structure under Mr Cowley's tutelage. I should not be surprised if he found post-prandial tasks as great a bother as pre-adamite man.

‘But,’ as the song says, ‘those days came not again!’ I was one of the ‘good boys’ when Dr Lawson gave us a treat, and brought some of us over here with Mr Cowley, to see the ruins, on a holiday afternoon—bless us all ! ever so many years ago. I dare not count the time ! How improved the old place looks.”

“Yes,” said Mabel, gazing round the ruins, and heaving a deep sigh as her eyes rested upon the walls of the Massey Chapel, “this place was Papa’s pride. He removed all those flower-beds and clumps of shrubs with which it had been disfigured, and carried on excavations in every direction. The whole of the walls of this part where we are now sitting were dug out under his directions. This used to be a shrubbery.”

“I thought I had no recollection of the Priory,” mused Mr Trigg, glancing at the stunted walls and broken shafts of the Guestin-Hall.

“Do you see that heap of oyster-shells in yonder corner, Mr Trigg?” inquired Mabel, pointing to a small mound in a corner of an outer office, which looked as if some of the tenants’ children had been preparing to levy mail upon visitors, with “Please remember the Grotto !”

"Whoever has had an oyster-feast here might have cleaned out the scullery," observed Mr Trigg, rising and moving in the direction of the little mound.

"They had not time allowed them," replied Mabel, with a smile. "The Assyrians of the Reformation came down like wolves on the Priory fold! Who do you imagine feasted on the oysters that once inhabited those shells?"

"Perhaps a Launcester Alderman," said Trigg.

"More likely the Prior of Lonsdale and his brethren. In clearing out the foundations of these offices the workmen came upon those shells. They were buried in the ruins, and most probably are the refuse of the last supper ever eaten within these walls!"

"Three hundred years ago!" exclaimed Mr Trigg.

Even so! Like the Priory itself, shell only remains. Henry VIII. gobbled up the monastic oyster.

Mabel, Mr Trigg, and Miss Lawson had reached the enclosed spot where the shells were piled up—evidences of Colonel Massey's conserva-

tive care for anything that was brought to light belonging to the ancient times.

“How singular these openings in the crowns of the arches are,” remarked Mr Trigg, looking down through one of them upon the swift running river beneath. Those jolly old Monks knew what they were about in choosing sites for their establishments. How exquisitely clear and cool the water looks, gliding over that pebble bottom. I suppose now, these openings were used for lowering buckets into the stream to supply the wants of the Priory.” So saying, Mr Trigg stooped down to examine the masonry.

“Is not this odd, Miss Lawson? Do just look here, ladies. Why! I declare here are the same sort of marks, like the slipping of heavy-nailed boot-soles.”

Thereupon a close examination of the mouth of the arch was made, as well as a comparison of the character of score exhibited on it and on the Priory wall.

Mr Trigg, Whiffler, and Hargreaves put their heads together.

“I have it,” exclaimed Whiffler, “Jacob’s story is true. The same person that slid down

yonder wall made off in this direction. It was getting dark, was it not, Jacob, when you saw those men escaping?"

"Aye, aye, lad! it war!"

"Then as sure as my name's Whiffler, one of them fellows stumbled over this hole, and it's a wonder to me he did not break his leg! That's the way them there scratches was made, depend upon it, Mr Trigg."

"Likely enough," said Mr Trigg, stretching himself at full length upon the grass, and bending head and shoulders into the cavity to scrutinize it closely.

"Put your head down here, Hargreaves, will you?" pursued Mr Trigg. "The light is so deceptive that I cannot see clearly. What's that patch of brown among the stones? Is it a bit of rock or sand, or what is it?"

Hargreaves peered down. So did they all, but the light from above shimmering upon the surface of the water, and the darkness of the tunnel itself, prevented any distinct examination of the river's bed.

Hargreaves having introduced his first and third fingers into his mouth, gave a shrill whistle

that resounded along the adjoining hill, and was heard bounding from wall to wall of the Priory, as if he were playing a game of billiards with his voice, and had "cannon'd" off the cushion with tremendous force. Before the echoes were finally pocketed under the tower, one of the beaters sprang from the wood, and was in attendance.

"Brockbank," said Hargreaves, "gang ye yonder, my lad, to th' top of th' tunnel, and get ye in. Walk thee down th' stream till thar cum here aboote, and then do as I tell thee."

In a few minutes Brockbank had obeyed his orders, and splashing through the stream, under the dark archways, approached the spot where their crowns were pierced with the apertures.

"Look thee here, lad," Hargreaves shouted up the tunnel. "Dunna thee cum adoun th' middle. Thee walk at th' side, and filth th' waater as little as thee can help."

Following his directions, Brockbank at last reached his destination.

"Look 'ee there, lad," cried Hargreaves, pointing directly downward with the muzzle of his gun, "that be'ent a stoan, be it?"

Brockbank did not at first perceive the object

at which Hargreaves had pointed; but on bending down, and putting his hand through the water so as to touch the gravel bed, he came upon it.

He emitted a stentorian laugh, which made the ladies jump with alarm; for the roaring utterance reverberating along the vaulting beneath them could only be compared to the "peals of devilish laughter" which shook the Domdaniel Cave when Thalaba cast in the gulf Abdaldar's ring.

"It's nout but a lump o' broun paper, Maester Hargreaves. What didst 'oo think it waas?"

Hargreaves, Trigg, Whiffler, Mabel, and Miss Lawson looked at one another with amazingly perplexed expressions of countenance.

"Regularly sold," ejaculated Trigg.

"Stop a bit," said Hargreaves, "Giv 't us oup here, my lad. Let's tak a look at she."

Brockbank had not previously moved the lump of paper. Now he bent down, and thrusting his big fist through the water, grasped it in his hand, and lifting it up, raised it overhead to Hargreaves, who made a long arm to receive it.

"I thout as much, my lady," he proceeded,

raising himself out of the arch, and depositing the pulpy mass upon the turf. "There be summut more 'an paper here."

Curiosity was once more aroused. Mr Trigg and Whiffler exhibited the greatest anxiety, while Hargreaves tore away the saturated paper, to arrive at the contents, which proved to be a parcel.

On being opened it was found to contain a book; but the instant Miss Lawson's eye fell upon the cover she recognized it. The quaint old binding and silver edges and clasps were familiar to her.

"Goodness, gracious!" exclaimed that lady, "why, it is Sir Nigel's famous illuminated 'Book of Hours.' How on earth came it here?" The book was quickly in her hands, and carefully wiped. Then she opened it to examine its vellum pages, and see whether the water had damaged their brilliant colours.

Miss Lawson ran over the edges of the pages with her thumb and finger. She was mightily pleased to find although the book had certainly been damaged, nevertheless it had been so tightly tied up in its parcel, that the water had not penetrated far, or particularly stained the pages.

“Dear! dear! dear! tut, tut, tut,” pursued the lady, “what will Sir Nigel say to this! I believe the book is worth a large sum of money. How could it have been lost? Was it stolen? And in such a strange place to find it! Tut, tut, tut! This is indeed marvellous!”

Once again Miss Lawson ran through the leaves.

“I beg your pardon, Miss Lawson,” observed Mr Trigg, “but is there not a loose leaf inside the cover? I thought I saw a page move.”

“So there is,” said Miss Lawson, lifting the binding and discovering half a sheet of note paper inside.

“Allow me, Madame,” said Trigg, impatiently seizing rather than taking the paper from Miss Lawson’s hand, and reading aloud the following memorandum; it was perfectly legible, although the ink had been slightly discharged by the wet which had penetrated to it.

<p>I found this book in the Massey Chapel, Lonsdale Priory, on the 16th of May, when returning home from Warfdale. W. Massey.</p>

“Confirmatory evidence, most certainly!” continued Trigg. “We must endeavour to put two

and two together. This book has been in the possession of Colonel Massey. That fact is established beyond a doubt. The entry proves he had not found it very recently, and therefore probably had it about his person at the time of the murder. This supposition seems the more reasonable because of the strange position in which the book has been discovered. The Colonel could never have wilfully dropped so valuable a volume into such a place; and the evidence of all the witnesses proves that on the night of the catastrophe he did not and could not have approached this part of the ruins. Assuming that this parcel was about his person when he was shot, and that it was seized as robber's prize, the scarified masonry of the Priory, and especially of this arch, explains the rest. The person who possessed himself of the booty (as he thought it) must have tumbled neck and crop over this opening in the arch, and in endeavouring to save himself, no doubt dropped the parcel, which fell down into the river and was beyond recovery. I feel certain this is precisely what occurred."

"But what conclusion do you draw from this discovery?" asked Mabel.

“I have not the slightest hesitation, Miss Massey,” replied Mr Trigg, “in saying I am now convinced of the truth of Jacob Price’s evidence! To what account it can be turned, I know not; but I am certain if we ever make anything of our investigations, we have got the clue.”

“And we may save his life?” asked Mabel, eagerly.

“WE may!” answered Mr Trigg, with a strong emphasis on the pronoun, and a sharp, searching look fixed upon Mabel’s face. “Who are *we*, Miss Massey?”

“I—you—all of us! Surely if we feel Blount’s innocence, and have confirmatory evidence that this atrocious deed was perpetrated by some other hand, we shall be doing no more than our duty in adopting every means in our power to rescue him from destruction.”

Mr Trigg smiled—a provoking, calculating, self-possessed smile.

Mabel frowned. She looked positively angry; for the expression on Mr Trigg’s face seemed to convey a distrust of her readiness to do as much as she professed.

“Excuse me, Miss Massey,” said Trigg.

“Perhaps we misunderstand one another! We can discuss the line of action which I would propose at our leisure. If Miss Lawson will pardon me, I should enjoy a stroll through the Priory!” Trigg bowed in the politest manner to that lady, with an apologetic look, as if he prayed to be forgiven expressing his own will and wish. Miss Lawson was sufficiently observant to perceive that Mr Trigg had a motive for his conduct, and compliantly rose to accompany him.

“Let this line of way be watched uninterruptedly.” His remark was addressed to Hargreaves; and the line was defined by a flourish of his stick, whereby Mr Trigg included the space intervening between the Priory and the moorland above the woods. “Your watchers can have no better work to do, I can tell you, Hargreaves, than in keeping a close look-out upon this track.” So saying, Trigg moved off with the ladies, leaving Whiffler to return at his leisure to the Hall.

At the east end of the Chancel of Lonsdale Priory a beautiful mosaic flooring of encaustic tile, approached by three steps, similarly constructed, marks the spot whereon the High Altar once stood. It stands centrally at the crossing of the

transepts and the choir, so that at Celebration in olden times, every prostrate worshipper within that superb church could witness the elevation of the Host. At some distance behind this site of the High Altar, the shattered remains of the once glorious east window rise above arcaded work; which, it has already been stated, runs round the whole of the transepts and choir. The east window had been inserted at some period much later than the surrounding architecture; for whereas the nave is Norman, the choir and transepts First-pointed, the window has been an elaborate piece of tracery of the Decorated style. The arcade beneath it projects so that a flight of steps on either side conducts to a narrow gallery, level with the sill of the window. To strangers visiting the Priory, this position affords a particularly favourable point of view, because it commands the whole church, and also (looking through the broken fragments of tracery) the valley behind the Priory backed by the northern hills, with the Laune winding and glittering through its rich grazing land.

Upon the top of the arcade, Miss Lawson, Mabel, and Mr Trigg seated themselves. The ladies waited for him to break the silence.

“There is nothing like going straight to the point,” said Mr Trigg (who evidently experienced considerable hesitation in doing as he proposed), “and beating about the bush would be foolish. But first of all, ladies, I must condition on the present occasion, that the virtue in which ladies are reported not to excel, shall be strictly exercised, and for once women must be found capable of keeping a secret.”

“Provided it is not treason,” observed Miss Lawson, with a smile.

“But it is treason,” replied Mr Trigg, “treason to the State, and a plot in which I must have fellow conspirators.”

“Who are to be your fellows?” inquired Mabel.

“Ladies!” ejaculated Mr Trigg. “Their names are Miss Lawson and Miss Massey.”

The individuals referred to looked astonished.

“I take you at your word, Miss Massey,” continued Mr Trigg. “You volunteered the remark that it is your duty to adopt every means in your power to rescue Blount Tempest. You observed my smiling at your words. I thereby questioned your readiness to act up to your profession. Let

me put you to the test. Listen to me. Hear all I have to say; and then give me your determination. I am a lawyer by profession, and having reviewed all the circumstances of this dreadful tragedy, I must tell you frankly, I can discover no fair means for cheating the gallows of another victim. I have not the smallest doubt, sooner or later, the innocence of Mr Tempest will be revealed; but it will be poor satisfaction to you, who love him, to establish his guiltlessness when he is snatched from you for ever."

Mr Trigg paused an instant, and glanced at Mabel, to see what effect his remarks were producing. Her head was buried between her knees. A convulsive movement of her shoulders was the only evidence observable; but it was sufficiently satisfactory to the speaker. He continued,

"My plot is to cheat the hangman! The law would consider it foul play! For once I would adopt in its fulness the principle of doing evil that good may come! The magnitude of the evil in such a case as this, would perhaps be differently measured by the frowning majesty of law, when it contemplated the perpetrator. For instance. If I, James Thelwall Trigg, Attorney at Law, were

detected in having conspired to conjure away a prisoner out of Her Majesty's Castle of Lancaster, it is in the highest degree probable that I should suffer for it, and no longer see my name on the rolls of the profession. But as we are told, 'Love laughs at locksmiths'—and that 'All's fair in love,' it is probable that if you—"

"I," exclaimed Mabel, springing to her feet, and standing before Mr Trigg, quivering in every limb with agitation.

"Excuse me, Miss Massey, you interrupt my discourse! I bargained to be heard. Pray resume your seat."

Mabel crouched to her place, like a whipped hound. Mr Trigg had assumed the air and tone of a dictator; and proceeded.

"I was about to observe, when you interrupted me, that even the law might regard with a softer look the act of a young lady endeavouring to rescue her lover from destruction, than it would be benign enough to cast upon any other person, more particularly if the same act were undertaken by one of those individuals socially described as 'cold-blooded lawyers.' It may perhaps sound like cowardice in me to propose a plot, and sug-

gest that a lady should execute it. Such is not the fact. I am quite prepared to take my full share in carrying into execution the plan which I should propose; and if I could accomplish it single-handed, believe me, Miss Massey, for your sake I would run any risk."

Miss Lawson smiled approvingly at this touch of gallantry. Mabel blushed, and graciously bowed. She was about to express her thanks when Mr Trigg interposed.

"Not again! I know precisely; but must not be interrupted. The fact is, Miss Massey, you can do that which I cannot. You can disarm suspicion. You can persuade a man who has not a thought but for you, to undertake a design which I might vainly attempt inducing him to undertake. I know Mr Tempest's character a little, I flatter myself! He is 'the soul of honour,' and all that sort of thing. He would rather be executed than do a dirty action. I have not the smallest doubt he would tell me he considered himself under a moral obligation to be hanged. Probably if I proposed my scheme to him, he would fire-up with honourable wrath, and indignantly show me the door—the cell-door. A very pretty conclusion

to come to. No, Miss Massey! we must run no risk of a mischance, and you—you only can accomplish my purpose, and induce Mr Tempest to act as I may suggest. Thank you very much indeed for listening so attentively. Now comes the question, will you brave both law and risk, and attempt the rescue of Mr Blount?"

Trigg paused, folded his arms, and with upturned eyes, glancing along the triforium, addressed himself to a severe study of ecclesiastical architecture.

Among a multitude of ways to answer questions, there is one which is a common feminine resource. It is to ask another.

"But how am I to do it? What *can* I do?" was the prompt rejoinder of Mabel Massey.

"Forgive me, Miss Massey," interposed Mr Trigg. "Your observation is no answer to my question. I asked a question, and your response is to ask me another. When mine is answered, I may show myself able to answer yours. First of all, I must press for a distinct reply, upon which everything depends."

Mabel turned to Miss Lawson, her invariable

guide and counsellor, for direction and advice. Miss Lawson was at a loss herself.

"It is a very serious question, Mr Trigg," observed Miss Lawson, "and Miss Massey very naturally hesitates."

"So I perceive," remarked Mr Trigg, in a dry and hard tone of voice. Miss Lawson had observed the peculiarity of manner which Mr Trigg had assumed in his conversation with Mabel. It was so contrary to his general bearing that she was puzzled to understand its meaning. Mr Trigg had a sufficient motive for acting as he did. Convinced that his chance of success depended upon the influence he could exercise over Mabel, he adopted that aggravating tone of doubt which a woman can ill endure. Let her see that you think she lacks the character, determination, or courage to play out some bold and hazardous part, and you put her on her mettle. You goad her self-esteem. You rouse her spirit, and whatever it may cost her, she thinks within herself, "I will show what I dare do, and can do!"

This was the state into which Mr Trigg had spurred Miss Massey's mind. She was impatient of a suspicion, a doubt, a word that could imply

want of devotion to Blount. If it could have served him, she would have walked to her death unflinchingly. But there was every difference between legitimate and illegitimate action. In whatever language Mr Trigg might clothe his proposal, Mabel confessed to herself that she was challenged to do a wrong. This was the point at which she hesitated ; and this was the point which Mr Trigg had shrewdness enough to see he must triumph over. He had rightly calculated the probable means for success ; and in addressing Miss Massey in language which implied that he doubted her, won the point he might otherwise have failed to gain.

After a prolonged silence, Mabel at length spoke.

“ Were the occasion any other than it is, were the case one short of life and death, I should at once refuse in any way to abet a scheme interfering with the administration of the law. I am but a young girl, Mr Trigg, and very inexperienced. You are many years my senior, and acquainted with the world and its ways. Moreover, you are a lawyer, and have been sent here in that capacity as my adviser. As such I should feel

myself constrained to bend to your opinion, even though my own was opposed to you. I have such perfect confidence in your judgment, such conviction that you would not prompt me to do anything you did not consider absolutely necessary, that I will at once close my eyes, and in blind faith follow wherever you lead me."

Mr Trigg suddenly ceased admiring the stone-carved faces of angels and minstrels upon caps and bosses. Lowering his glances, he betook himself to a scrutinizing study of the human face divine. Instead of its being a sunny day in August, the period of the year might have been December, so assiduously did Mr Trigg devote himself to rubbing his hands and slapping his thighs. With approving nods of the head, and a muttered sound between his closed lips, he signified as plainly as if he had spoken,—“Pray go on, I do not wish to interrupt you. I quite approve of your remarks. Finish your speech.”

Miss Massey did finish.

“But, Mr Trigg, you will clearly understand it is in compliance with your advice that I shall act, and upon you the moral responsibility of my actions must rest.”

This was spoken with great earnestness and gravity. Upon Mr Trigg it failed to produce any marked effect. He seemed perfectly equal to meeting the emergency—a sort of Atlas in private life, capable of bearing upon his shoulders full-orbed responsibility for the entire circle of Miss Massey's ethics. Atlas-like, the only evidence of sensation that Mr Trigg exhibited, was a slight elevation of the shoulders, as if he were conscious of the weight imposed upon him, and had set his back to bear the burden.

Mabel observed him. Feeling a little disappointed with the palpable failure of her remark in producing any grave impression, she resolved to fire her last shot, and then to surrender at discretion.

“Above all, you will remember that I am a lady.”

Mr Trigg opened his eyes their widest, and stared their strongest.

“And as a lady, you will neither ask nor expect me to do anything that might put a girl to the blush, or (for I feel this the strongest) lower me in the respect of Blount.”

There! Mabel had said all she had to say.

The exasperating Trigg remained uncrushed, even unruffled. With the calm self-possession of a master-mind, he condescendingly smiled at Mabel's final conditions, and briefly rejoined,

"Let me at once assure you, Miss Massey, that I am not the person to propose any line of conduct other than such as a heroine might undertake, who had resolved to venture upon a bold action to save her lover's life."

That was all. Mr Trigg had his combatant at the point of his lance, and like a true knight dropped his spear and rode on.

"Miss Lawson," he continued, "you are witness to this treaty. Its conditions are simple: Fidelity. Obedience. Action. We shall be obliged to extend the boundaries of our confidences. One or two trusty confederates we must have. In their selection I must be guided by your advice. All I ask is, that whatever I say must be done, shall be done promptly, and without questioning. If we are agreed, let us shake hands upon our compact, and proceed."

So they joined hands together; and Mabel, with tears in her eyes, glancing towards the Massey Chapel, exclaimed, "God prosper our work."

“There are one or two matters about which I should like to ask a few questions, if you will allow me,” said Mr Trigg, passing away at once from a subject that he considered finally arranged and settled.

“It appears to me very strange that at the trial there was no discussion raised about the pistol, with Blount Tempest’s name upon the plate, which was discovered under the body of Colonel Massey. The prosecution considered it as damning proof of the prisoner’s guilt. Upon my mind it has left the strongest possible conviction of his innocence. I confess it is inconceivable to me that on such an occasion, and under such circumstances, Mr Tempest would be carrying a loaded pistol about his person. Englishmen are not accustomed now-a-days to walk about the country with fire-arms in their pockets. Suppose Mr Tempest had been so armed, it would lead us to the conclusion he had meditated assassination. All the circumstances of the case seem to me to discredit such a supposition. If such be the fact, how came the pistol there? The murder was effected with it. There can be no question upon that point. Whoever possessed that pistol was the

murderer ! Sir Nigel Tempest swore positively to the weapon being one of a brace given by him to his nephew. Can you tell me anything about those pistols ? Where were they kept ? At Warfdale ? At Oxford ? In whose charge were they ? Had any one access to them but Mr Tempest himself ? ”

Neither Mabel nor Miss Lawson could give Mr Trigg the smallest amount of information.

“ I am quite at a loss upon this subject,” said Mr Trigg. “ It passed over so completely unchallenged by the defence, that Serjeant Poyntz must have thought the evidence dead against him ; or, which amounts to the same thing, he must have been ignorant of some very important fact, which might have turned the balance of evidence in favour of the prisoner. Can you give me no satisfaction ? ”

“ We are as ignorant as you are,” Miss Lawson observed. “ We have never heard a remark made upon the subject before ; but it appears to me Mr Blount himself is the only person who could enlighten you. You had better refer to him.”

“ If he knows anything, or omitted at his trial

to state any facts regarding the pistols, of which he was cognizant, I consider he has done as much to hang himself as any of the witnesses against him. I must look into this at once."

Mr Trigg relapsed into silence. He had enough upon his mind to tax the reflections of the acutest, and this fact his companions fully appreciated; so they sat contentedly waiting his pleasure, until he had another observation to make. Mr Trigg toyed with his stick; measured with his eye the length and breadth of the nave and transepts, and became transfixed by a sparrow taking its pastime upon the tiled-floor of the High Altar.

Miss Lawson amused herself by examining the illuminated capitals upon the pages of the Book of Hours. There was a big B floreating over a whole page, with branches upon which parrots in gorgeous plumage were swinging; monkeys squatted upon the perch of the letter; old monks with long cowls wheeled barrows along the lower bar of the B, as if they were starting on a centrifugal railway, and were determined to go with a run round the arc and land safely at the station, where the two curves ran into the trunk line of the letter. Miss Lawson and Mabel smiled

at the quaintness of the design, and examined with delight the exquisite artistic taste of the monks, by whom the volume had been embellished.

Mr Trigg's eye was at last arrested by the book, and the current of his thoughts turned from pistols and prosecutions to illuminated missals and psalteries.

"By the way," said Mr Trigg, rising and bending over the ladies to admire with them the richly emblazoned vellum pages, "how singular it is we should have discovered that book to-day. I wonder whether it will help us to unravel this mysterious affair? I fancy, as a lawyer, that I know something of text; but upon my word I never beheld any hand-writing as perfect as this. No letter-press could surpass it in precision."

"And none approach it in beauty," said Miss Lawson. "Mechanical power may outstrip the hand in the quantity of work it can turn out, but it can never rival it in quality, any more than the most artfully constructed instruments can approach in tone the cadences of the human voice."

"In this age of stump-oratory and extra-parliamentary utterances, when the 'representatives of the people' (with their tongues in their cheeks)

rush off once a year to their constituencies to butter the grocers, soap the chandlers, and curry favour with free and independent haberdashers," (struck in Mr Trigg, who held it as an article of faith that the Reform Bill had been a failure; that it had not effected the ends it promised; that no one knew this better than the over-rated and over-estimated political blunderer, Lord John Russell; that the House of Commons had degenerated; that it had once been a body of legislators; that it was now split up into knots and sections; that class-interests were represented by successful commercial adventurers, admirable men in their mills and manufactories, but ridiculous in a legislative assembly; that "all for peace" speculators would sacrifice the honour and dignity of the country to sustain present trade-profits at the risk of future prosperity and peace; that the arithmetic of the ledger had fatally muddled the pure English feeling and patriotism which once reigned supreme in the House, when every man who sat there had a pride in his country superior to pride of purse; and on entering those doors brought with him an educated mind, a cultivated taste, a knowledge of the

King's English, and a capacity for regulating with correctness the aspirates of his mother-tongue: when Old Sarum and Gatton and other reviled "close boroughs" were both useful and beneficial as cradles for the brilliant talents of rising but poor men, without which nurseries of genius Parliament might never have listened to the transcendent eloquence of Burke or Sheridan);—"in this age" (continued Mr Trigg, full to the brim with the hereditary political sentiments of the time-honoured firm of Probyn and Probyn), "we must not dare to say a disrespectful word of 'mechanical power.' Everything goes on wheels, now-a-days; we cultivate the earth, we plough, and sow, and reap, and make, and mend, we travel by land and by water, we do everything we can by wheels! It is an age of progress, you know, and we may yet live to see the tedious process of mastication done by wheels. A patented construction, which would grind food and put it down our throats in a twelfth part of the time it would occupy the 'human' to eat it, would be a wonderful economist with strong claims upon the commercial consideration of the 'City.' It is true we have not yet accomplished thinking by wheels! You must par-

don me rambling away from our subject ; I must accuse that book of causing my transgression. I think I know a little of mediæval art, and I am quite certain there is no art to compare with it. Despite all our wheels, and going by steam, we cannot approach the handicraft of the old monks in taste, or design, or execution."

"How refreshing it is to hear you say so," exclaimed Mabel. "Oh ! how I wish Blount were here, sitting by my side, to hear you."

"Indeed," said Trigg. "So, so, Mr Tempest has the same proclivities, has he?"

"Has ! I think he lives upon the past!—Lives ! what do I say ?"

Miss Massey was touching upon a point which Mr Trigg particularly desired to avoid, so he cut short that turn of the conversation by reverting to the Book of Hours.

"Do you happen to know anything concerning the history of that book?" inquired Mr Trigg, directing his conversation to Miss Lawson.

"Yes!" she replied, "I think I know its history tolerably. It is strange enough that it should have fallen into the hands of a Massey, since it was long the property of that family. Sir

Nigel regards it as one of his heir-looms ; but in reality it was a gift to him from the late Mr Gerald Massey, the elder brother of Col. Willoughby, who was drowned, as you will remember, a few years back by the breaking of the ice upon the Laune. The book had originally been in the possession of the family of Blundell. By an intermarriage it had come to be deposited in the Durham-Massey library.” (When Miss Lawson made mention of Gerald Massey’s name, Mr Trigg observed with surprise that she exhibited emotion, which she struggled hard with herself to conceal. Mr Trigg affected not to have observed it ; but mentally he had marked it down, with a note of interrogation, to serve for future consideration.) Miss Lawson continued, “The late Gerald Massey again connected his family with the Blundell’s. He married Mabel Blundell, whom you may have heard the tenants and people in this neighbourhood speak of as ‘Madam.’”

“Oh ! I remember her perfectly well,” said Mr Trigg. “A stately dame she was. Proud of her old family ; proud of her husband ; and I think, above all, proud of her Catholic Faith, to which her ancestors had rigidly adhered.”

“Precisely so,” answered Miss Lawson. “But, to continue. When Mabel Blundell came to be mistress of Durham-Massey, this volume was taken as a sacred treasure into her particular keeping. She prized it; she studied it; she knew every line of it. The close friendship which has always existed between the families at Warfdale and at Durham is familiar to you. It was, perhaps, more dear in ‘Madam’s’ esteem, on account of Mrs Geoffrey Tempest belonging to the same faith as herself. Indeed, I may say, it was she who made up the match between Mr Geoffrey and his wife. Madam Massey was godmother to their eldest child, who out of compliment to her wishes and to her relations (the Blount’s of Maple-Durham, in Berkshire) was baptized ‘Blount.’ But to return to the book. You must examine it, and admire it as you would a picture, while I tell you its history. When you observe the binding, and the designing of the silver-work and clasps, and when you compare them with the illuminations of the book itself, you will at once detect a difference of period. Look at the purely Byzantine ornamentation of the capital letters (in which architecture is introduced), and the fanciful elaboration of the

silver-work, and you will perceive that the book is much older than the binding which covers it. Now, first of all, examine the silver-work. A Cardinal's hat in the upper portion upon one side ; a Coronet on the other. Beneath each a shield elaborately engraved with coats of arms, bearing similar devices. You observe the heraldic ribbon that runs below each of those shields ; upon one the letters 'A. O. de' M. ;' upon the other 'à M. de' M.' In the centre is the date 1600. The emblazoning of the shields naturally suggests that the donor and receiver must have been members of the same family. Such was the fact. Pray have you ever been at Florence ? ”

Mr Trigg leapt upon his feet at this question. It came upon him so unexpectedly and so abruptly ; moreover, it so instantaneously transported his thoughts to the house of the Digby Shirleys, and to the conversation he had there held with Madame Carbone, that his start was involuntary.

“ Is there anything particularly extraordinary in my question ? ” asked Miss Lawson.

“ Not in the least,” replied Mr Trigg, recovering himself, and with a true legal appreciation of

the impolicy of evincing emotion under any circumstances whatever, he mildly sank again upon the turf-grown sill of the window, and replied, "No! I have never beheld the city of the Medici."

"Had you done so, you would hardly have failed to recognize familiar quarterings. Those in chief are the arms of the Medici. The initials belong to Allessandro Ottaviano di Medici, in 1600 a Cardinal of Rome, and subsequently well known to the world as Leo XI. The opposite initials belong to the famous and unhappy Marie de Medicis, Queen of Henry IV. of France, and cousin of Leo XI. You will observe upon her shield the lilies of France. The history of this ornate binding, with its heraldic devices, is, that the book was a bridal present from the Cardinal to his cousin, on the occasion of her betrothal at Florence to Henry IV., by the nephew of the then Pope, Clement VIII., Cardinal Aldobrandini. It was a great event in the history of the House of Medici, Grand Dukes of Tuscany. The Duke de Bellegarde, as representing the King of France, led the Princess, supported by her uncle, Ferdinando I., to the throne of the Cardinal, erected beside the High Altar of the famous Duomo, sur-

mounted by a canopy of cloth of gold. The marriage-procuration was read by attendant prelates, and the authority of the Pope for the solemnization of that ill-assorted marriage was given. That was the occasion on which this book was presented to Marie de Medicis, and which she carried in her hands to the Church of St John at Lyons, the following December, when she was publicly married to the King, her stomacher adorned with the famous diamond, and pendent pearls, known throughout France as the 'Queen's Brilliant.' You see I know my lesson pretty correctly. Do I not?"

"You certainly do, Miss Lawson."

"I ought, for heaven knows I heard it often enough from Madam Massey! I have not, however, finished my story. In fact, though you look intensely interested with that binding and its associations, I shall interest you much more when I instruct you regarding its contents. Stop! Just let me look at the book, if you please, that I may see if it is all right."

Mr Trigg passed it to Miss Lawson, who opened it, and carefully scrutinized the title-page.

"Yes," she continued, "it is all right, though

I am afraid the moisture has faded the colours a good deal. Now, Mr Trigg, and you, Mabel, my love, examine that page, and tell me what you make of it."

The page was a mass of illumination, richly decorated with gold, which stood out from the vellum in strong, metallic relief.

"Do you observe any peculiarity about it?"

"I see a flowering tree," said Mabel.

"Yes, and some pale, cramped writing," added Mr Trigg, "which my knowledge of ancient documents teaches me must be very old. The words are so abbreviated that I cannot make them out."

"I did not expect you would be able," continued Miss Lawson, "for they certainly need a key to explain them. The device is intended to represent a damask rose-tree; and the quaint, scrawling writing is as follows,—

frate: Hieron: Sabon^{lra}: Prior. S. Marco.

D. D.

Lorenzo EL. Magnifico.

En. Mem: Clarici.

* Tu piangi e taci; e questo meglio parmi—

* "Weep, and be silent; this to me seems best."

“The book was a present from the famous Dominican and Prior of St Mark’s at Florence, Savonarola.

“Savonarola !” exclaimed Mabel and Mr Trigg simultaneously.

“Even so. You see the book has a pedigree which renders it of immense interest and value. The damask rose has reference to a tree in the cloister of St Mark’s, beside which, when Savonarola had been recalled to Florence by Lorenzo, in 1490 (at the instance and entreaty of Giovanni Pico, Prince of Mirandola), the eloquent Monk used to sit and teach. The damask rose-tree still survives through generations of shoots which have preserved it, in their descents, to the present day. Lorenzo il Magnifico was in the habit of walking in the Convent gardens, and of seeing Savonarola teaching his followers the truths of Scripture, under the shadow of the rose-tree. Lorenzo looked for particular respect, even subserviency, in the Convent of St Mark’s, which had been erected at the expense of his grandfather, Cosmo de Medicis, in 1443, at the cost of 36,000 florins. Savonarola refused to cringe like a courtier or a hound to the Magnificent. Lorenzo

then courted *him*, attended mass at St Mark's, gave costly gifts to the Church, but in vain attempted to bribe the Frate into becoming a courtier. Savonarola preached under his damask rose, and took no heed of the Magnificent when he came to pace the garden. The gold coin that Lorenzo poured into the poor's box, the Dominican despatched to I Buonomini (whom his predecessor Saint Antonino had constituted*) saying

* Antonino had been the first Prior of St Mark's, and was subsequently raised to the Archiepiscopal chair of Florence. The marble statue which now stands in the quadrangle of the Uffizi commemorates him. He was a man as distinguished for his godly life and for the numerous charities which he founded as S. Carlo Borromeo, at Milan. While Fra Angelico decorated the convent walls with his ever famous paintings, and Cosmo enriched the convent library—the first public library established in Italy—Fra Antonino was earning for himself a far higher and better name by the holy love and charity of a life that gave him a just title to the name of Saint. By him the Bigallo of Florence (an institution founded for purposes of inquisitorial persecution) was converted into a Society of Charity to visit the orphan in distress. By him the above-named society Buoni Uomini di San. Martino was founded, and, happily, under the laws which he gave it, still flourishes. “The Benevolent Men of St Martin” have to collect alms for respectable but impoverished people—for those who are ashamed to beg, and would rather hide their poverty—i poveri vergognosi. The fundamental rule of the Buonomini is that an inviolable secrecy is to be preserved as to the names of those who receive relief. St Antonino—an

that copper and silver were quite enough for the Frati of St Marco. We all know the estrangement that ensued: and how, literally, Lorenzo saw his face no more until the day of his death. But that day arrived at last, and when Lorenzo's 'Platonic' friends could give him no comfort; when the glory and power and splendour of his career could not shut out from memory his many crimes, his tyranny and oppression; then did he remember the unbending Prior, the one man in Florence who had never fawned upon him or flattered him.* To that man the dying Magnificent turned in his extremity, and received this Book of Hours.

"The damask rose-tree, you see, had its meaning. It was Savonarola's emblem of the 'Word of Life,' which he had to proclaim despite Lorenzo. 'Life, in truth, exists only as one, and is God himself,' he declared in those sermons on the First Epistle of St John, which he was preaching when the Magnificent took such deadly offence. That damask rose would be a terrible rehonour to human nature, to Florence, and to his Church—has left behind him an institution such as is sorely wanted in the metropolis of England.

* "I know no honest man but him," said Lorenzo.

minder to Lorenzo of the acts against which the monk had protested, as opposed to the principles of the Gospel of Christ. It would remind him of the sacking of Volterra, the robbery of the Monte delle Fanciulle, and the massacre after the conspiracy of the Pazzi. The Dominican, it is said, when first summoned to Lorenzo's presence, refused to go. Perhaps it was at that time he sent this book, from the Frate Hieronimus Savonarola to Lorenzo the Magnificent, in remembrance of Clarice. Clarice Orsini (one of the great Orsini family) had been his faithful, virtuous, and loving wife, the mother of his children,—of Giovanni, afterwards Leo X., of Giuliano, who allied himself with the crown of France, and became Duke de Nemours. Clarice had died but a short time before Savonarola was recalled to Florence, and her excellencies were well known to him. There! You have now heard the history of the book. The Frate did see the dying Magnificent. When he heard he was really dying he went to him, and told him of the three things necessary to make his peace with heaven: Faith in the mercy of God; Restitution of the property of which he had despoiled the helpless. To these Lorenzo signi-

fied assent. But when the Frate demanded restoration of liberty to the people of Florence, he turned scornfully away. The Dominican left the Magnificent unabsolved, and so he died.

“Does my story interest you?” inquired Miss Lawson.

“Intensely,” replied Mr Trigg. “You have fully accounted for the value in which Madam Massey held this volume. Even to me you have invested it with an historical interest which I never felt in any other book.”

“Ah!” said Miss Lawson, “if books could speak, and tell of those who have read them—of the thoughts, minds, hearts of their readers, the volumes we handle so carelessly would preach morals to us which all the eloquence of their contents could not rival. But if this book remains complete there is one portion of it we have not yet noticed. Just turn to the end, and see if there are not a few pages altogether different from the MSS.”

Mr Trigg did as he was desired, and found some richly printed leaves introduced, with a very ornate heading, “Mass for the Bridegroom and Bride at the Benediction of the Marriage.”

"That," observed Miss Lawson, "is the portion of the volume which particularly concerned Marie de Medicis. Those pages were introduced by her cousin, the Cardinal, when he sent her this marriage-gift in its splendid binding."

"It seems to have been used at some later period," suggested Mr Trigg, "for I observe an entry here of a modern date."

"What is it?" asked Mabel, with curiosity.

"I read it 'Sant: Ambrogio. October, 1832.'"

"1832!" Miss Lawson echoed the figures with a deep, piercing sigh, at the sound of which Mabel and Mr Trigg looked up in surprise.

"That dreadful, dreadful year," said Miss Lawson.

Mr Trigg at once had mental recourse to the Register, to consider what had made the year so dreadful. Supposing that Miss Lawson might have had some family bereavement at the date referred to, he very naturally remarked, "I am afraid you must have lost some one very dear to you in that year."

"Lost," exclaimed Miss Lawson, "I did indeed! I lost both that which was nearest and that which was dearest to me on earth."

In his astonishment Mr Trigg had closed the book, and with his attention diverted from it to Miss Lawson, all thought of the marginal note, of the Marriage Service, of Marie de Medicis, and of Savonarola passed out of his mind. It was palpable Miss Lawson's thoughts had been effectually carried off in some distant direction, and that her interest in the book was also gone.

Thus it happened for the second time Mr Trigg had his hand laid upon a most important discovery, which eluded him and slipped away from under his grasp, when another touch might have revealed it. The position was somewhat embarrassing; and Mr Trigg was at a loss what to say in order to restore the conversation to its natural flow. He thought, therefore, he would give it a turn by introducing some new topic.

"By the way, you were asking me just now if I had ever been at Florence; and you seemed to imagine I thought your question somewhat extraordinary."

"You received Miss Lawson's question with a very peculiar expression of countenance," observed Mabel.

"I fear my face was a great tell-tale, Miss

Massey," rejoined Mr Trigg; "and if so, exceedingly unprofessional. I confess, however, I was a little struck by the singularity of the fact that before leaving London one of the last conversations I had was with reference to Florence. On arriving here I find the same place the topic of talk."

"Well," said Mabel, with a laugh, "if your friend in London was as historical and interesting as Miss Lawson has been, you must have enjoyed your society extremely, I should imagine."

"I assure you I did so, Miss Massey; and the conversation was historical, although it extended no further back than the year 1835. You will be surprised when I tell you that the historical incidents I then learned were gathered from a lady's-maid."

"No class of people more competent to give information," interposed Miss Lawson, with an expression of particular aversion to "that class of people."

"I must allow," pleaded Mr Trigg, with an apologetic manner for the society in which he confessed himself to have been, "my lady's-maid particularly interested and instructed me. She

had been attendant at Florence upon a Madame Dupont !”

Mr Trigg had made a tremendous mistake in the “turn” which he imagined he had given to the conversation. Miss Lawson received his announcement with an actual scream. Her excitement was intense. Mabel, thoroughly alarmed, sprang to her side, apprehensive of what might happen next. Evidently enough, Mr Trigg had plunged into some topic of the most distressing character to Miss Lawson; but what it was neither he nor Mabel Massey could remotely guess. So hysterical did Miss Lawson become, her form so rigid, her hands so tightly clasped together, that Mr Trigg was terrified, and suggested he should run for assistance, if Miss Massey would take charge of her indisposed friend for a few moments.

“No, no. Not for one moment,” gasped Miss Lawson. “Don’t move, don’t stir. For the love of God, stay where you are, and be patient with me. Some water—water—wa—”

She fainted away.



CHAPTER V.

THE DAWN OF DAY.

"Is the year only lost to me?
Have I no bays to crown it?
No flowers, no garlands gay?—all blasted?
Not so, my heart."—*G. Herbert.*



WITH a plentiful supply of water from the river, chafing of the hands, and recourse to the usual expedients, Miss Lawson was at length brought round. She heaved many heavy sighs; her eyes slowly unclosed, and she stared with a confused expression into the faces of Mabel and Mr Trigg. Consciousness gradually returned. Presently she was able to sit up, to glance round the ruins of the Priory, and to collect her thoughts.

Miss Lawson was a strong-minded but a warm-hearted woman. Self-respecting, she was scrupulously observant of the respect and consideration due to others. When she had thoroughly rallied, and came to reflect on the

shock which Mr Trigg's remarks had caused her, together with the strange exhibition of agitated feelings into which she had been betrayed, she felt that some explanation was absolutely necessary. It was due to herself, that she might not be subjected to any misconceptions; it was due to her companions, especially to Mabel, who stood confounded and perplexed by what had occurred.

Still she shrank from speaking. To unclose the book and volume of the mind when it has been closed and clasped for years, to turn over the pages of a life's Diary, and open at the particular leaf which for years and years we have ourselves shrunk from regarding, this is no easy task, as all know who have experienced some early and bitter sorrow which they have sedulously concealed from human knowledge and striven to hide and put away from their own contemplation.

A high-born, handsome woman; thoroughly well educated, refined, accomplished, agreeable, it had been the astonishment of all who knew her that Miss Lawson had throughout her life retained her maiden state. She was one of those striking personages who in a crowded assembly at once command attention. A tall, graceful

figure; a handsome face, lustrous with intelligence, and a mind well stored with knowledge upon all subjects that commonly engage society in conversation, combined to make Miss Lawson peculiarly attractive, and much sought in the social circles with which she mixed. Thousands of times the question had been asked, "How is it Miss Lawson never married?" To that question no one could give a better answer than, "I presume it was because she did not choose,"—or, "Perhaps she has never met with the right person; she has certainly had opportunities enough, if she had felt disposed to embrace them."

The truth was, Miss Lawson had never changed her state because *she had met* with the right person, and because she could not marry that person she would never marry any other. The disappointed and crushed hopes of her early life were known only to herself. No other human being had ever suspected them. The object of her youthful attachment had never suspected or reciprocated her love. He had gone to the grave, and in his grave her heart was buried.

The time had at length arrived when the seals

of silence were to be broken ; when circumstances were about to open the book of memory ; when the history of her life was to be revealed, and the secret which she thought would have gone with her to her own grave was to be made known.

Could Miss Lawson have foreseen this when Mr Trigg startled her with allusions to a Madame Dupont, it is possible her mind might have been more unstrung than it had been. She had not, however, the smallest suspicion of the end to which the explanations and inquiries she was about to make would lead her. Her thoughts were engrossed with recollections of another, not with considerations of self.

She commenced. "My darling Mabel, you and Mr Trigg may well look perplexed. Some explanation is necessary. It is necessary in order that you may understand the cause of my agitation ; and it is also necessary, because otherwise I should have no right to question you, Sir, regarding the conversation to which you have referred."

Mr Trigg and Mabel were all attention. A long pause ensued, during which Miss Lawson

was struggling to control the tumult of feeling which agitated her.

At length she said, "I will be as brief as possible, for the subject costs me so much pain, that the fewer words used the better. I had a younger sister. Her name was Bertha. She was four years younger than I; but, like many elder sisters, I always treated her as a child. Domestic concerns had trained me into being her guardian and guide, for in very early life we lost our mother, and I was compelled, to the best of my young ability, to supply her place in my father's house. My father, Lord Grassdale, was not a rich man, and having no son, we knew the estates would pass away at his death to his nephew, the present Peer, then a very young man, on foreign service, and almost unknown to us. Lord Grassdale had served under the Duke, and was present at Badajoz, Salamanca, and Vittoria. On account of his distinguished services, the Crown was pleased, subsequent to his decease, to grant me the apartments I now enjoy in Hampton Court Palace. From my father's friends I and Bertha received the greatest kindness and the most delicate attentions. From none more than

the families at Warfdale and Durham-Massey. Our visits in the neighbourhood of Launcester were regular; and some of the happiest days of my life were spent in companionship with the late Mrs Geoffrey Tempest and Madam Massey. When Blount and young Geoffrey were born, I nursed their mother; when their father died at Florence, it was my duty, together with Sir Nigel, to break the terrible news to her; and mine were the hands that closed her eyes in death. The close friendship which existed between me and Colonel Willoughby you have witnessed, my darling Mabel. When he committed your education to my charge he gave me the best proof of his confidence and esteem. Enough of this egotism. Upon my father's death, I felt Bertha bequeathed as a legacy of love to me. I became more than ever her sister and mother. Perhaps in my anxiety for my charge I may have over-performed my part. God knows I never intended to do so: but in course of time my sister became, as I thought, rebellious. She frequently resisted what she called my 'dictation.' My dictation was my love. I watched over her with trembling anxiety; for she was so young, so lovely, so gay,

so high-spirited and thoughtless, that I trembled as I watched her : and was often serious when I rejoiced in her joyousness and ringing laugh. I have alluded to Madam Massey. As Mabel Blundell she had been brought up in the strictest principles of her Church. When she married General Massey, her family made it a binding condition that if she had children, the eldest son should embrace his mother's faith. As such, Mr Gerald was trained and educated 'at Stonyhurst—the college in which the children of many of the highest Catholic families at that time received their education. Willoughby was allowed to follow his father's faith ; but Gerald, the eldest born, was always the mother's favourite. You will not be surprised to hear what followed. Both Madam Massey and Mrs Tempest used all their influence to induce me and Bertha to join their Church. Upon my mind their arguments and representations failed to produce the desired effect ; but with Bertha they succeeded. All the arguments and influence I could exercise to retain her within the pale of the Church of England failed. She was so far yielding to my entreaties that she took time for reflection, and promised to

make no profession until after she came of age. I hoped everything from time. I was mistaken. When she was one-and-twenty she openly professed herself a convert, and was received into the Catholic Church. From the moment that step was taken I felt my influence was gone. We lived together in sisterly love and union; but there was an end for ever to my 'dictation.' I saw with pain and sorrow it was enough for me to give advice to have it resisted. She claimed to be mistress of her own actions; and for peace' sake and for love's sake I learnt to be silent. In those days the General and Madam were the only tenants of Durham-Massey. Gerald, after coming of age, had been for a length of time upon the continent, especially at Rome and Florence."

Mr Trigg became intensely interested when Miss Lawson had reached this portion of her story.

"Willoughby Massey, as you are aware, had gone into the army when very young; and, offended with the marked preference and favour bestowed upon his eldest brother, he went to seek his fortunes in the world, never to return to Durham until it was as master of the estate on the

untimely death of his brother, and years after both his parents had been summoned to another world. But I must not anticipate. Bertha and I were paying our annual visit at Durham, when the General was suddenly taken ill. Our services and our society were a great comfort to Madam. We helped her to nurse the invalid, who gradually declined, and after a few weeks of acute suffering, died. The estates devolved upon Gerald, who was summoned home from Italy when his father's danger was apparent, and who only arrived in time to receive his dying blessing. As speedily as might be, Bertha and I returned to Hampton Court. We had not been settled in our own apartments many weeks when a letter came from Madam Massey inviting us to accompany her for a tour upon the Continent. She said her health required a change ; and the associations of Durham-Massey had become so sad to her, that change of scene was absolutely necessary. If we would accompany her, she should consider it as a favour conferred on her ; and she would enable us to enjoy ourselves as much as we felt disposed. Bertha danced with pleasure on receipt of this letter. 'Of course we shall go, and be delighted

to accept dear Madam's invitation,' was her impulsive exclamation. 'At least I shall go,' she added, 'whether you like to do so or not.' I confess I had my own hesitations upon the matter ; but Bertha's decision unhappily decided me. The invitation was sufficiently tempting ; I had never been abroad. The prospect was too alluring, and without offering any counter-opinions, or venturing to dictate, I readily consented, and we went. We were to travel through Belgium, by way of Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, and Waterloo, to Cologne. Thence by the Rhine to Mainz, forward to Heidelberg ; through Switzerland to Lucerne, across the Alps to Como, Milan, Padua, Verona, and to spend the gay season in the winter at Venice. On setting out for our tour we were unaccompanied, except by a courier and servants. Gerald Massey was detained at home by business ; but he promised his mother to hasten after us as soon as he was able. Meanwhile we were informed a M. Dupont residing at Heidelberg, would meet us in Germany, and if Madam wished it would see us safely on our road to Italy."

"Dupont," exclaimed Trigg. "How exceedingly remarkable."

“Now you understand the astonishment with which I heard that name uttered by you,” said Miss Lawson. “I wonder what the story is which you have heard; or whether the Madame Dupont of whom you spoke, can be in any way connected with the M. Dupont to whom I refer.”

“It is quite impossible for me to say,” answered Mr Trigg, “but when you have finished your narrative I can easily tell mine.”

“If you have no objection,” replied Miss Lawson, “I should like to hear your story at once. I shall soon see whether it connects itself in any way with mine, and if it does I shall be better able to continue.”

“As you please,” said Mr Trigg. Thereupon he gave in the fullest detail an account of the dinner-party at Mr Digby Shirley’s; of the musical performances of Signor Carbono; and of Madam Carbono’s declaration that she had been in attendance at Florence in the year 1835 upon a lady known as Madame Dupont.

“Two years, two years,” muttered Miss Lawson, speaking to herself. “It may be so;—it m—a—a—y be.” Then turning to Mr Trigg, she inquired,

“Did this woman, Carbono, tell you the lady’s age?”

“No.”

“Was she tall or stout, light or dark? What was she like? Can you describe her?”

“I cannot.”

“And this Dupont! what about him? Did she give you any description of him? I should know him again—the villain—among ten thousand.”

“I did not hear a syllable about any such person. In fact, I very much doubt whether—”

“Oh! I see! I see! I see!” ejaculated Miss Lawson, with passionate emphasis, striking the ground with her clenched hands, and rubbing her lips together with spasmodic contortions, while her face flushed, and the veins charged with the “blue blood” of her family stood out in knotted lines upon her temples. “I see, I see it all; spare me, spare me! Oh, Bertha, Bertha, shame, shame, shame!”

“I ask your pardon, Miss Lawson,” pursued Mr Trigg, lost in perplexity, “but I have nothing to spare you about. I know of no shame whatever.”

“What, sir,” she said, almost leaping upon the terribly puzzled lawyer, as if she were about to lavish upon him the pent-up fury and anger of a score of years. “What, sir! Can you palliate or excuse her conduct for one moment? Can you look me in the face and bid the blush of shame which you see burning on my cheeks to pale, by assuring me that that man was her husband?”

“No, I certainly cannot.”

“I thought not, I knew not;” and Miss Lawson thudded the sod with her heel as if she were trampling on an asp that had stung her.

“What I was about to say,” continued Mr Trigg, determined to say it, and have it out at once, “was that I very much doubt whether there was any M. Dupont.”

“But I know there was,” rejoined Miss Lawson, snapping him up before the words were scarce uttered. “I say I know there was; for I have seen the man, spoken with him, travelled with him—”

“I do not doubt you,” said Mr Trigg, “but if the story I have heard be true, no M. Dupont

was either protector or husband of the lady who bore that name at Florence."

"Then, in God's name, who was? Release me from this living hell of misery, and tell me if you know who was?"

"Madam Carbono asserted she was the wife of Gerald Massey."

* * * *

The remnant of the Samaritans who still exist in Nablous (the ancient Sychar) are fond of conducting travellers through the mists and darkness of the small hours to the summit of Mount Gerizim. The white clouds float around in such dense masses, that they look like sails which might be handled and furled. Arrived at the spot where every Easter-day the Paschal lamb is still slain, and the ancient rites of the ceremonial performed in their integrity, the European crouches in some covert until the light begins to show. Gradually the troops of clouds in white mantles clad (hurrying, charging past like an army in retreat) begin to divide their ranks, and take to flight towards distant mountain-camping fields. From the lofty top of the Mount of Blessing the eye suddenly discerns the outline

of Ebal, the Mount of the Curse. It stands directly opposite, confronting the spectator, and suddenly brought (as it appears) within his reach.

Dark, gloomy, repulsive it breaks upon his sight; when, as by a magic stroke, from behind the chain of hills overlooking the broad valley and Jacob's well, crimson rays of glory spring into the sky; the blush of dawn leaps triumphantly, mounting on billowy-clouds of rose-red tints, from crag to crag, from mound to mound; and the Mount of Blessing looks over on the Mount of the Curse to see it clothed in brightness, and its dark shadows transmuted into golden light.

Through a long night of years had Cecilia Lawson stood upon the Mount of Blessing, where duty is faithfully performed. Clouds and thick darkness had been about her. The prospect which she had once contemplated with delight had been shut out from view. Suddenly the sables of that night were stript away; and the sister of her early life began to be dimly discerned. But like Ebal, to her vision, she was clothed with a curse. Dark with sin she seemed to stand before her. Repulsive she appeared. Then in one moment

the dawn of better hopes sprang up. Light, knowledge, information leapt out from the chain of hills, the boundary events of life, and the heart of the sister, blessed through all the actions of her existence, beheld the sister it had regarded as cursed, clothed in virtue, and the darkness of her career transmuted into sinlessness and purity.

* * * *

Like Hermione, Miss Lawson stood. She seemed more a statue than a human being. Her figure immoveable, her features stone-like, her gaze fixed on vacancy. Nothing betokened life and thought save the corners of her mouth, about which a sweet soft smile gathered, dimpling the corners of her cheeks, and nothing more.

Timidly did Mabel approach her, and, like another Paulina, by her action said,

“Turn, good lady,
Our Perdita is found.”

The touch of Mabel's hand made her start, and recalled her to the world, to the scene around her, out of which she seemed to have been transported. Slowly she bent ; her hands fell around Mabel's neck, and she kissed her tenderly on the

forehead. It was not Mabel who stood before her in her thoughts. A long-lost form was there. It seemed as though time, like some huge rocks in her path, had suddenly rent asunder, and from a fairy land within, a form, a face, smiling with the beauty of youth, approached.

“ You gods, look down,
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter’s head ! Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserved ? where lived ? ”

Her sister-daughter had been conjured up before her. She saw her, as plainly as if she had gazed on the palpable form in life.

It was a sweet, sweet imagining : and slowly and unwillingly her mind aroused, and returned to the full consciousness that the heart and not the eye had created the deliciously enchanting scene on which in mute ecstasy she had been rivetted.

“ And was that Bertha ? ” slowly enunciated Miss Lawson, addressing, as it were, spirits in the air, and not any person near her.

It was beyond Mr Trigg’s power to answer the question. He had certainly heard in former years of Miss Lawson’s sister. He was conscious

there had been such a person, but his knowledge extended no further.

“Was that Bertha?” Miss Lawson again asked, this time addressing her question to Mr Trigg, and looking him in the face.

Mr Trigg confessed his inability to enlighten his questioner !

Miss Lawson took no notice ; she seemed hardly conscious of the reply. The same smile played about her lips ; and she was content for a time to live in the world of her own thoughts, and to feast on the hopes which had been impregnated in her mind.

At last she said, “The time has come. The dead past must be disentombed. I must know the truth ; and to know it, must make what I know, known. Sit by my side, Mabel, and put your hand in mine. Take your seat, Mr Trigg, and listen. A voice within coerces me to do what I had thought never to have done. Yesterday I would rather have torn my tongue out by the roots than have confessed what I am now about to say.

“You spoke of Gerald Massey. Well, well ! I *loved him* ! ! I loved Gerald Massey. He was

the idolatry of my young life. He engrossed all the love of which my nature was capable. His presence was sunlight to my soul. His absence to me was night. But he never knew I loved him. He never guessed the secret locked up in my breast; for he never cared to seek the key. Let me do him justice! My heart withered under an unknown and unrequited passion. I knew he had not a single responsive feeling for me; and the hidden fire of my passion consumed me. I loved him! O God, how I loved that man! It was idolatry, and for my idolatry I suffered.

“You say he married! You say the woman who had a title to his name was called Dupont. Had it been any other name under heaven but that, I should have disbelieved the story. Ah, me, me! That name seems to sweep away a film from before my sight. I begin to see, to see it all, to see the truth! Had I not been blinded, like a silly fool, had I not been stone-blind in my own thoughts, I ought to have suspected this plot before. It was well you told your story first; now hear the climax of mine. When we left England with Madam Massey, we travelled leisurely through

Belgium, studying the antiquities of the old Flemish cities, and delighting in the works of Hemling and Van Eyck. On arriving at Cologne our astonishment was great, not only at finding the promised Dupont awaiting us, but also Gerald Massey. He had been able to arrange his business more speedily than was expected, and had hastened across to Cologne to receive and to surprise his mother! The next few weeks were the happiest of my life. We wandered together through the German towns, curiously examining the Romanesque architecture of the churches, climbing up the hills to inspect the ruined castles, and rummaging out the plate, and vestments, and reliquaries under charge of any Sacristan we approached. Remember I was still a very young woman, and Gerald Massey was the most accomplished man I had ever met. His society lent a charm to every place we saw or visited. He could tell its history, point out its antiquities, and delight us with information without seeming to teach. He was our constant companion; and while Dupont was directed to attend upon Bertha, it commonly happened that Gerald took care of me. What wonder that I came to love him, when there was everything to excite a young

girl's love? Handsome, accomplished, agreeable; destitute of one particle of affectation or conceit; the master of a fine estate,—he was a man whom any woman might have loved. I never knew I loved him; at least, I never confessed it to myself until jealousy awoke me to the truth. I saw, or thought I saw, Bertha wished to take him from me. I fancied she took a pleasure in enticing him to her side, and engaging him for her companion in our rides or drives. Then I upbraided myself for my folly. It seemed as if Gerald could read my thoughts, as if he knew what was passing in my mind; and when he did so, I always noticed he returned to me and made himself more agreeable than ever. This probably was artfulness. I neither saw it nor suspected it at that time. We arrived at Heidelberg. Heidelberg had long been the residence of Dupont. His family had been connected with the place ever since the days of the Elector, Frederic V. When that Prince Palatine was paying his court to the Princess Elizabeth of England, he took into his service, upon the death of Henry, Prince of Wales, various officers of that Prince's household. Among others, Solomon Von Caus, and Henri Dupont.

Dupont had got placed about the person of the Prince, when Marie de Medicis and her relative Cosmo II. of Tuscany were acting as rivals, and striving to win the hand of the heir of England; the Queen for her daughter, Princess Christine; the Grand Duke for one of his sisters, whom he promised James I. to embellish with an enormous dowry. Death baulked the success of either one or other. Von Caus became the servant of the Elector Friedrich, and Dupont accompanied him in the train of his bride to Heidelberg. Von Caus laid out the gardens of the Castle, in that splendour of which the traces are yet distinct;* Dupont followed the fortunes of his master into Bohemia, and was present with him at the disastrous battle of Prague, in 1620. Since those troublous times of struggle between Austria and

* In the extremely interesting collection of antiquities belonging to M. de Gramberg, contained in the Friedrich Buildings, in the Castle of Heidelberg, there is the original picture which was painted by the Elector's commands for him to show to the Princess Elizabeth, in order that she might see what magnificent gardens and terraces Solomon Von Caus had constructed for her pleasure, when she became mistress of the Castle. The picture is an admirable painting and in splendid preservation, so that it is now the most accurate and valuable exponent of the splendours of Heidelberg in the height of its glory.

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the Palatinate, the family of this man seems to have clung, as the ferns do, to the rocks upon which Heidelberg rests. I note this man's history, because these Duponts were Huguenots. Henri had been sent to England to be about the person of Prince Henry, because of his religion. His descendant inherited his Lutheran faith. I remarked this particularly, and it surprised me Gerald Massey should attach to his person, and have about him, a man whose religious principles were professedly so opposed to his own. Dupont was a thorough citizen of the world, and a person whose talent it was to make himself useful. At Heidelberg he was reputed a teacher of languages. In some such capacity he had become attached to Gerald Massey, who had picked him up in Italy. On taking us to see the Church of St Peter's, I remember with what delight he pointed out the tablet to the memory of Olympia Morata, and how he extolled the beautiful and erudite professor, who was compelled to fly from Ferrara to escape persecution. I watched the placidity of Gerald's face with surprise, but I had not then suspected the fact which I believe I am now about to discover. Was Dupont his tool? If Gerald used

him for his own purposes, I can understand everything. Thanks to the forethought of Gerald and to the unceasing endeavours of this man, Heidelberg was enchanting. The Molkenkur, with its unrivalled prospect of tower and castle and winding Neckar, hill, and valley, and distant mountain; Wolfsbrunnen with its pretty orchards and sloping valleys; its silver-grey pools, and its sparkling trout, trailing lines of golden light along the surface of the water, beside which the hungry wolf sacrificed the beautiful Jetta; Königstuhl, with its long and steep ascending roads, cleared through the forest depths; its shady oaks, its funereal pines, its tower-crowned summit, looking out upon that magnificent sweep of country, stretching from distant Taurus, and the gates of the Rhine, along the river-valley, skirting the Bergstrasse and the base of lofty Melibocus, away and afar to the Odenwald and Haardt mountains; in the plain, Worms, and Mannheim, and Spiers, until the Black Forest, over against Baden, shuts in the horizon, and the spire of Strasbourg twinkles in the sun, at such remote distance, that its heaven-piercing pinnacle glisters like a slender needle against the grey light; these were, from day to

day, our haunts. What delicious ferning parties we used to have ! With our little baskets and trowels we wandered over the Saint's Mountain, above the Philosopher's Walk. Among the fragments of stones which once perhaps were heathen temples ; among the walls of convents, which the French in their bloody sieges of Heidelberg, under Turenne and Melac, had destroyed ; among the crumbling fragments, where Roman villas had stood, and baths for Imperial ladies existed until Napoleon's time, we used to pursue our favourite enterprise, and gather the luxuriant rue-ferns from amongst the interstices of the stones.

“ So the days passed on, sometimes darkened for a moment by the clouds of my own jealousy, and then lightened with the smiles of Gerald, as he helped me to climb the steep ascents, or led me through the intricate roads of the woods. It seemed to me Madam Massey approvingly regarded her son associating himself with me ; at least, I observed she always preferred seeing him with me, rather than accompanying Bertha. Perhaps, in this also my own feelings blinded me to the truth. One night, in particular, I noticed her impatience. We had been a walk across the

Neekar-bridge and along the Hirschgasse to the little inn where the students fight their [duels. It was a clear moonlight night, and the view of the ruined castle was superb. Gerald and Bertha had lingered on the river's bank contemplating the lovely prospect, and returned to the 'Prinz Karl,' somewhat later than I and Madam. Madam was undisguisedly out of temper. The next morning Gerald was gone! What may have occurred between him and his mother I knew not. I never dared to ask. He was gone, called away on business; and questions to Madam were out of the question. With his departure my pleasure ended. Thenceforth it was a long, desperate struggle to disguise my feelings. For the world I would not have let his mother guess that I missed him, loved him, mourned over him. I felt my loss the more acutely when I saw the undisturbed happiness of Bertha. She was all liveliness and joyousness, while I was down-cast and sad. I had ceased to take any interest in our walks or drives, when one evening we were informed the Castle was to be illuminated. This roused me for the moment from torpidity. It was a marvellous spectacle. Imagination could almost

realize the scene upon which the ferocious Melac had gazed. The town's-folk crowded the river-banks, or the Castle gardens, the long-walled and arcaded terrace which still testifies to the ingenuity of Solomon Von Caus ! Hundreds of Bengal fire, alternately crimson and white and green, within the shell of the ruins, illuminated the Castle, with its multitude of windows and towers and bastions. Against the sky the brilliant colours flared, and up the hills, and across the water, and to the summit of the Saint's Mountain, every object stood out as clearly defined as in the light of day ! Gradually the lights paled : and then the crowd was left in a pitchy darkness. Madam Massey and I were together. Bertha had been standing near us. On turning round, expecting to find her at hand, we could no where discover her. Concluding we had been separated in the darkness of evening, we made our way back to the hotel as best we might. She had not returned, nor had she been seen. Hour after hour we waited in the most painful suspense, but Bertha never came. The agony I suffered is indescribable. Servants were sent in every direction ; the grounds of the Castle were searched until morning, fearing

some accident had occurred upon the dangerous slopes. All was useless. She was gone! I never saw her again. The next day letters came, which seemed to clear up the mystery. She said she had run away with the man Dupont. She said she had formed an attachment which she could not control, but which her own observation told her could not have my approval. She spoke truly, for connection with such a man was degradation. She added, I had no need to fear for her; she would never do a moral wrong, and before many days I should hear she was a wife. I did so hear from Milan, from Venice, from Trieste. Once or twice I received letters from places she was always on the point of leaving. Then the communications ceased. I heard no more! I believed her, as I do believe her—dead! God forgive me, if it was a relief to think she was dead. After fruitless endeavours to learn tidings of my sister—broken-hearted, humiliated, deserted, I returned to England, whither Madam Massey had preceded me. Every sympathy and kindness she could show me during the short period she lived, I experienced at her hands; but she never mentioned the name of Gerald. What

his conduct had been, or in what he had displeased his mother, I never knew. I could not guess; and I had not the temerity to ask. Next came his sudden death. I had hardly heard of his return to England, of his visiting Durham-Massey, before the catastrophe occurred which hurried him to his grave, and left me widowed at heart—and what you see me now, a woman without a hope in life, who lives to do her duty! Now you understand the meaning of my words. I lost at once the nearest relative, and also the dearest person on earth, to me. That is my tale.”

Mr Trigg and Mabel had listened with breathless suspense to every syllable of Miss Lawson’s startling story. The deepest impression made upon their minds arose from the confession of Miss Lawson’s love, and the discovery of the person on whom it had been bestowed. They had been so completely amazed by the revelation, that neither one nor the other had taken much heed of the important details concerning Bertha Lawson and the man Dupont. Miss Lawson’s mind was fixed upon that portion of her story. The confession she had made would never otherwise have passed her lips.

“And this Madam Dupont of whom you speak,” pursued Miss Lawson, “is stated to have been the wife of Gerald Massey. That sounds strange! Very strange for the wife of one man to be known by the name of another. There is some mystery at the bottom of this affair which I am unable to fathom. Was Bertha the wife of this Dupont? Can you inform me?”

“I am painfully ignorant,” replied Trigg; “I have already told everything I know or heard. The fact is, during the whole of the day in which I met Madame Carbono at my partner’s house, I had been prosecuting inquiries by Mr Probyn’s direction regarding the case of Massey *v.* Massey, in order to obtain information concerning the unexpected claimant to the estates, which were bequeathed by the late Colonel to Miss Mabel. I had scarcely arrived at the particulars, when the singular conversation with Madame Carbono occurred.”

“I forgot that part of the business. Forgive me, dear Mabel, for overlooking a subject which so deeply concerns you. Well, Mr Trigg, you had been making inquiries. Did they help you, or will they help us to unravel this mysterious

tory? Pray who is this unknown presumptive heir to the Massey estates?"

"Gerald Massey's child, as I am informed."

"His child!" exclaimed Miss Lawson, as if the words would choke her. "So!—he left a child! And the child's name is—?"

"Clara Harcourt," answered Trigg.

Miss Lawson had ceased to wonder. One discovery had followed so quickly upon another, that she had got beyond the capacity of experiencing astonishment at anything further she might have to hear.

"What! the music-mistress, the singing woman! She! she the daughter of Gerald Massey, the heiress to his estates, the rightful owner at his death! Impossible! It cannot be."

"It is not impossible," said Mr Trigg, very gravely, "but I agree it seems highly improbable."

"As sure as you live," interrupted Miss Lawson, with emphasis, "as sure as you live, there is some villany at the bottom of this claim! It is a plot, a base, wicked plot! Heaven and earth must be moved to discover and expose it."

"Agreed," said Mr Trigg. "Upon that point

there can be no two opinions ; but how is it to be done ; and who is to do it ? ”

“ Who ? Cecilia Lawson ! Whatever it costs, if it can be discovered I will do it ! I will ransack Europe for evidence, and if the evidence exists, I will seek it out. There is one person who knows the truth. That man is Dupont ! Alive—if alive, he must be found. Have I not every motive for the search ? If I can trace my sister’s history, if I can clear her memory from the blot which I have believed to rest upon it, if I can preserve my own dear Mabel (who has been to me as my own child), and expose a vile conspiracy, I shall not have lived for nought, nor have loved Gerald Massey in vain.”

“ Whe-e-e-w,” whistled Mr Trigg, with a gallant bow to the feminine Quixote before him, “ we are likely to have our hands full of work. A gentleman condemned to death is to be rescued from the hangman’s clutch ; a run-a-way sister is to be traced ; a teacher of languages is to be dug out of the obscurity of Europe ; a defunct gentleman’s conduct, life, and actions are to be brought to light, and the marriage registers of Christendom are to be searched to prove a possible negative,

for who knows whether Gerald Massey was ever married at all? Talk of Hercules! His labours were a bagatelle to this. How many lawyers are you going to engage to conduct these searches?"

"None at all," answered Miss Lawson. "A woman's wit is frequently worth the legal dexterity of a court of lawyers. One thing, however, at a time! The most pressing first. What is to be done for Blount? In that affair we are your servants. You guide and command, we obey."

"I will take a few hours to reflect," Mr Trigg replied. "You can give me one piece of information perhaps which is of consequence. Does Sir Nigel still keep his yacht?"

"Certainly, the *Arethusa* has been lying in Morecombe Bay for weeks past. She was ordered round from Ryde when the long vacation commenced. Blount and Sir Nigel were to have cruised in her this summer off the north coast of Ireland."

"What sort of a master has she got?" inquired Mr Trigg.

Miss Lawson and Mabel both smiled at this

question, as the vision of Jack Laddler rose before their minds' eyes.

"Jack Laddler is her master," said Mabel.

"Trusty?" asked Trigg.

"Trusty! He would go through fire, as he has for many a year through water, to serve either Sir Nigel or Blount!"

"The very man we shall require. Let him be privately communicated with at once. Let him be told to hold his craft and crew in readiness to sail at a moment's notice. Above all, let him be cautioned to hold his tongue,—say Mum: and keep the yacht away from shore."





CHAPTER VI.

THE BRITISH PUBLIC.

“The rabblement hooted, and clapped their chapped hands, and threw up their sweaty night-caps,,”—*Julius Cæsar*.



ox populi vox D——! How should the word end? We are taught not to take the Supreme Name in vain; but if there is a proverb which successfully does so, it is the above, sprung from an unknown parentage, for the preservation of which the world is indebted to William of Malmesbury! It is well the name of the idiot has been forgotten who confounded the vociferations of King Mob with the Vox Dei. The same man would have mistaken Pandemonium for Heaven!

How talismanic the phrase, “the British public!” In how many attitudes has the British public been photographed! How exceedingly striking are all those attitudes! A general elec-

tion exhibits the noble form of the British public in an imposing position! With the graphic accounts we have on record of the utterances of the Vox Populi at Bristol, and Manchester, and Nottingham, and Belfast, men of retiring habits and unimpassioned blood may perhaps be forgiven wishing to escape from any personal contact with the British public! Circumstances, however, compel us in the present instance to take a glance at King Mob, and to regard him in one of his favourite positions, that is to say, when he plants himself at the foot of the gallows, and spends his night in jocular expectation of the highly edifying, warning, and improving spectacle which awaits him on the morrow.

Contemplated upon such an occasion, the Vox Populi has perhaps more the tone of the Vox Diaboli than Dei.

It was a Sunday night. The town of Lancaster exhibited unmistakable evidences of popular excitement. From the railway stations troops of mechanics and labourers were observed pouring into the town towards dusk. Short smock frocks, dog-skin caps, brown corderoy jackets and trowsers, flaring waistcoats with canvas sleeves—

such habiliments sufficiently testified the class of people who were being congregated together. "Our Moll," and "Suke," and "Mary Hann," came also, and in hundreds. Linsey-woolsey petticoats; black silk bonnets, adorned with tremendous cabbage roses; white shawls flowered with tulips; babies in arms struggling violently and howling horribly; baskets tied up in pocket-handkerchiefs (which were the larders of a day's "out") stored with cold bacon, and cheese, and apples, and cob-nuts, and bottles of invigorating rum—these were the outward signs and evidences of a female advance upon the town of Launcester. The men smoked, the men sung, the women screamed, the women, hot, and dusty, and weary, regaled themselves from convenient costermongers' donkey carts with genial "pop." The infants blubbered and slobbered. The constabulary looked on and joked. The British public was to be kept in good humour. Orders from head-quarters had been received that policeman X was to be facetious; for was it not a great holiday? and ought the majesty of the mob to be depressed in spirit when it had come, with its best wardrobe, from far and near to enliven the exit of a fellow-being out of the world? Be-

sides, have not public executions a great moral purpose? Are they not edifying to the people? Do they not make converts at the foot of the scaffold? And are not the conversions from sin and crime, to righteousness of life, worked by Jack Ketch, recorded by thousands in the books of the law, which he who runs may read? Who shall dare to doubt when senators, who teach us wisdom, protest it is so?

Evening closed in. The excursion trains reaped a harvest for the companies. So beneficial were they, that a director remarked he should like to contract for an execution every Monday morning. In a crimson blaze the sun had gone down beyond the horizon of Morecombe Bay, as if he blushed at the spectacle from which he hurried to escape. Amidst the gloaming, light began to stream through the long line of stained glass windows in Launcester church. The pealing organ sounded across the grave-yard, and the voices of choristers blending with its harmonies, swelled the notes of Christian song, whose echoes floated over to the grim Castle, and arrested the attention of loiterers along the terrace which sweeps around the courts of law. Within the church the Chris-

tian preacher taught his hearers the message of the Gospel, and the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses." Without (in immediate proximity to the church-yard), the preparations had already commenced to enforce, with bloody accuracy, the Levitical ordinance, by a nation which boasts to live under the Gospel, and not under the Law.

The select corner from which the hangman holds forth at Launcester, from which in the midst of death he is supposed to teach great lessons of life to an awe-struck British public, happens to adjoin the church-yard. A circular tower (of modern date) abuts upon the base of the Great Keep. The angle it forms is the chosen spot for Christian, legal shambles. This corner, though in itself retired, is, nevertheless, commanded by the summit of the hill on which the church and church-yard are situate. So it happens, that, congregated together in the burial-ground and collected upon the Castle Terrace, many thousands are enabled to see the doing to death of a fellow-being, whenever the law holds one of its high festivals of blood.

With a stout barricade the ground which was to be occupied by the scaffold had been divided

from the public. Double lines of police were stationed behind it. Within, there was, as yet, nothing but a vacant space. The tall walls of the Castle, and the lofty battlements of the Keep, looked down darkly and frowningly through the grey evening shades upon this fated corner. When evening service at the adjacent church was terminated, and decent Christians had gone home to bed, the crowds of people who were straggling about the town began to turn their steps towards the church-yard. "Roughs" (as they were called) from every part of the county were there. Creatures with cropped hair, indented noses, and black eyes—pugilistic casts of countenance, jested, and jolted, and blasphemed, up the hill and the long steps leading towards the church, until, the yard and terraces were reached. From hour to hour the pens, which had been railed off by the barricades, grew more and more filled, until, towards midnight, the crowd became dense in every direction from whence any view of the spot, where the scaffold was to be erected, could be secured. One passage alone had been left open, extending under the church-yard walls. It was unguarded and unkept, but all who wished, could freely pass through

it. The crowds arranged along the walls above, looked down upon this suspicious thoroughfare, and from their position could see and hear everything that transpired among the "British public" beneath. The night-air, with scarce a movement of wind, was laden with the fumes of tobacco. Clouds of smoke, like a pall, hung over the heads of the people, as vapours hang about the mountaintops. Vendors of roast potatoes drove thriving trades, mingling their commercial invitations of "All hot, all hot," with the cadences of a hymn, "Come, come," and "Sinners, come," which was doled out in lugubrious staves by a sleek and withered being in decayed, rusty black, who had undertaken the office of psalm-singer to the costermongers upon this appropriate occasion. The jumble of words between some men singing "Come, come," and others shouting "All hot, all hot," was further confused by an extemporized missionary, who, seized with a call to "improve the occasion," was vociferously trumpeting the terrors of damnation to an audience which alternately cheered and chaffed the preacher, finally requesting him to "shut up," and ensuring acquiescence in their request by bonneting him.

As the night wore on, the laughter of women and the derisive shouts of boys, proclaimed that the "fun" of the occasion had begun. The "passage" being the only means of ingress or egress to the space about the Castle, was the chosen scene of onslaught and depredation. When any one of decent demeanour and respectable attire made his way along this narrow alley, a swarm of children quickly gathered round to impede his progress. Then he began to be hustled and pushed. Indignantly the victim resisted the pressure, and squared his arms in self-defence. The next instant his hat was battered over his eyes, his arms seized, his coat torn open, and in a few seconds, his pockets being rifled, his watch and chain plucked away, his rings wrenched from off his fingers, the mob around him fell back, and left the stripped, crest-fallen sacrifice of thieves and pickpockets, standing in the midst of jeering urchins, and degraded women. Such was the scene, and such the preparation of the multitude for the awful tragedy which, in a few hours more, they had been invited by English law to witness. About three o'clock a heavy rumbling movement was heard. The tramp of horses' feet sounded on

the pavement, and along a road, cleared for its advent, the huge, black machinery of death was jolted and dragged to its destination. In the darkness of the night, figures could be dimly descried coming and going. Ladders were raised, a black beam fell heavily into sockets made to receive it upon the tops of upright posts, black draperies were stretched around and about. Then a cheer and a howl arose from the multitude as a solitary figure mounted the scaffold, and coupled a heavy chain to a ring in the centre of the beam. It was the executioner! Like a well-known actor coming on the stage, the mob saluted the dusky figure, for, despite the mysterious darkness of the night, the familiar form was speedily recognized. All was ready. Nothing more was wanted, save the hour and the man. Four hours more, and he would present himself. But how should King Mob get through those tedious hours? His Majesty had been treated to hymns, and they were unattractive. He had been preached at, and had bonneted the preacher. Victims of the passage had ceased to offer their persons and their purses as a prey to the sharks of the slums and stews. There seemed no resource but practical jokes.

Pelting with apples, scrambling over the heads of the crowd, playing at hand-ball with hats, afforded entertainment to the "Bolton chaps" and "Wigan fellies" who had collected in strong force. Pastimes such as these, were eagerly pursued until the dawn of morning broke, and the multitude for a while reposed under the soothing influences of drink and smoke.*

Is it to encourage such a scene as this, that the laws of England, with a stubborn resolve, determine to perpetuate public executions? How long will society endure the fallacious plea of moral influence brought to bear upon a mob? There is not a spectacle on earth so demoralizing in its influence, so brutalizing in its character, as is invariably presented where the gallows summons the dregs of society, and creatures of morbid tastes in

* This is not an exaggerated picture of an execution, drawn from imagination. It is a plain, unvarnished account of the scene which occurred in front of Newgate, on the morning of Feb. 22, 1864; when the details above given were noted down as they occurred, to provide truthful materials for this chapter. The only liberty taken with the facts has been the change of locality from London to the North. The author was credibly informed that Champagne breakfasts were given by "parties of gentlemen," who hired the upper rooms of taverns opposite the gallows, to enjoy the exhilarating spectacle upon that occasion.

higher life, to be spectators at its exhibition of the Dance of Death. Men and women of abandoned lives, of degraded habits, of the lowest propensities, are invited to have the savagery of their appetites pandered to and pampered. This "influence," the only influence produced by dangling human puppets out of this world into another, and making a *show* of them openly in sight of the British public, is exercised with the highest sanction of the law, in a country which makes boast of its Christianity and civilization.

* * * *

"Sweetly, oh! sweetly the morning breaks
With roseate streaks,
Like the first faint blush on a maiden's cheeks;
Seem'd as that mild and clear blue sky
Smiled upon all things far and nigh."

There had been something strangely weird-like in the aspect of the scene, during that season held in suspense between night and morn, when a chill is on the earth, and though darkness is over all, it is a darkness which can be seen. In its mysterious revelations, a forest of heads swayed backwards and forwards, as if it were a myriad of pendulums congregated together, marking the seconds that intervened before the death-struggle.

Gradually the faces of these animated time-keepers emerged from the gloom. Thin wreaths of smoke curled upwards into air, suggesting to the mob that it was breakfast-time within the condemned cell; and furnishing to busy tongues a fresh topic of talk, as to how many slices of toast the doomed man would eat, and how many cups of coffee he would drink. Above the walls, and from the battlements, pigeons came out to take their morning exercise, and sweep in circles round and round the fatal spot. Then settling on the ledges of windows and of doors, they plumed their feathers, arranged their wings, and seemed to settle down into their places, as observant spectators of the strange scene, concerning which, they coo'ed with inquiring notes, and pouted their breasts and ducked their heads in wonderment.

At last the day itself was full of life and light. The morning sun shone vigorously. The hour was at hand.

What was that strange, hoarse murmur which grated and clashed along the outskirts of the crowd, as if some huge machinery had suddenly broken down, scattering confusion and uproar around? The murmur swelled into a howl. From

mouth to mouth the scream was passed, as from ear to ear the tidings ran. "Escaped! Escaped!" was roared on every side. "They have let him escape." "Shame! shame!" "Cos' he vas a swell," suggested a stalwart dog-fighter. The Vox Populi eagerly caught at the suggestion! The oracle approved, a scene of confusion, mingled with hisses, groans, hootings, and oaths, succeeded, which did not perhaps strictly verify the truth of the Malmesbury proverb. The Divinity of Public Opinion pronounced there was not even law for rich and poor. A poor man would have been hanged! but "those —— aristocrats had done it." "No doubt they had bribed the jailors, and contrived that one of their own sort should not be publicly disgraced." A riot seemed at one moment imminent. The mob beat against the stupendous walls of the feudal Keep, as if it would have liked to batter it down, and hang the governors or turnkeys, by way of reprisals for its disappointment. The pigeons were disturbed, and took to flight. But the stout masonry of the impregnable Castle remained unmoved, with stony indifference. Such missiles as could be collected were hurled at the gibbet. Failing a living

object upon which to vent disgust, the mob singled it out, and upon its beams, and bolts, and chains, and bars, the vials of the public wrath were violently poured. That timber-pated representative of the majesty of the law having been plentifully pelted, and transformed into a thing of shreds and patches, nothing remained for the collected thousands to exhaust their spleen upon save the windows of shop-keepers in Church Street and Market Street, down which they poured in anger and confusion.

The report was true. The prisoner had escaped. A day or two before that appointed for the execution, Mr Trigg had carried into effect the plan which he proposed to Miss Lawson and Mabel. An interview between Mabel and Blount had taken place. The authorities regarded it as a final leave-taking; and under the circumstances, an unusual leniency had been shown towards the prisoner. Upon such consideration and delicacy of feeling, Mr Trigg had confidently, and not mistakenly, counted. Blount and Mabel were permitted to be alone. The watchers were withdrawn from the interior of the "Constable's" chamber, and Mabel was enabled, without inter-

ruption, to follow out the instructions which had been given to her by Mr Trigg. As that gentleman shrewdly and correctly anticipated, any other person would have failed in inducing Blount to hazard an attempt, which would never have suggested itself to him, and which he would never have attempted, but his heart was unable to refuse the last, desperate entreaty of the girl, who knelt to him and implored him, if *he loved her*, to prove it by acquiescence in her wish.

“You have not forgotten our conversation in Magdalen Walk, have you, Blount? Every note of that music of my soul,—the love you then confessed for me, is engraven on my heart for ever! You told me circumstances developed heroism of character; and when we spoke of Hampden’s firmness, you hoped you might be spared the trial of having to exercise the same quality! Do you recall my words? ‘Remember, I shall quote Hampden to you if ever ——’ and you stopped me. The sentence may be concluded now!—if ever you are called upon, in some great extremity, to act as resolutely as he did. Ah! Blount, Blount! what blind mortals we are! How little can we foresee events! I am a fatalist perhaps.

Though I could not foresee, I *forefelt*. Many a human being has the feeling which forecasts events, I had it then. Your love was joy, rapture to my soul; but in the brightest sunshine I forefelt the storm. I *knew* our love would have to pass through some fiery trial. 'The course of true love never did run smooth,' they say; how could I expect it to be untroubled, when so much cloud and uncertainty hang around my existence? Who am I? Whence came I? What am I? These are questions which my own heart asks inquiringly, and gets no answers. Like one who dreams of dreaming, I seem to walk the world. Behind me, and before me, darkness and mystery. I know not whence I came! I know not where I go! without you, I care not! Oh! Blount, do you remember you told me I was the light upon your way? Oh, yes! the stars shine brightest when they are surrounded with thick darkness—as I am: as I am now! Make your words real words now, my own darling" (and she twined her arms around his neck, and laid her soft cheek against his), "let me be the light upon your path! No *ignis fatuus* to mislead, but to guide you out of danger into safety."

“What *do* you mean, my Mabel?” said Blount, with wonder-stricken eyes.

“I mean,” she replied, whispering in his ear, and kissing it, “you must escape from these dungeon walls!”

“Escape!” exclaimed Blount, “impossible! I could not, and if I could I would not!”

“Would not, Blount! Would not! Not if I asked you? If I, thus bending my knees before you, which I never yet have done save to God alone—if I implore you for my sake to do as I shall ask and as I can direct?”

“I say, my child,” he answered, “it is impossible. I will never bring shame upon my name.”

“The shame *is* brought, Blount,” Mabel hurriedly replied, “but not by you, my darling! I know that! The shame will rest upon your memory, cling to your family, be a blot upon it for ever, unless you have the resolution to remove the shame by daring,—daring to live, and braving the law, and bursting prison walls, to prove your innocence and claim your rightful freedom.”

“How can this be done?”

“Answer me one question, Blount, it is the

only one I have to ask, but it needs an answer. When that pistol with your name engraved upon the plate, was found, under,—you know what I mean,—how came it there?”

“I cannot answer you.”

“Do you know nothing concerning it? Where was it kept? How came it in any other person’s possession but your own?”

For the first time since the event, Blount recalled the occurrence in his rooms at Oxford. It flashed upon his memory out of the shadows of forgotten facts. Stupefied he sat, perplexed, amazed at his own thoughtlessness. Then followed his recollections of the conversation with his scout. In the excitement of Commemoration he had never given a second thought to the occurrence of the pistol having been removed from his rooms; and in the agitation of the trial, when his mind was preoccupied with other subjects, he had taken no notice of the formal question put to Sir Nigel, upon which no cross-examination had occurred to attract his attention. Mabel’s anticipations were more than confirmed. She saw the full and horrible truth of Mr Trigg’s remark, that if Blount omitted at the trial to state any

facts regarding the pistols, he had as good as hung himself. She repeated, word for word, all Mr Trigg had said, and with delight she observed the revulsion of feeling she instantly caused in Blount's mind. The golden opportunity had been gained, and she seized it.

"You see now," she exclaimed, "how your calmly and unresistingly surrendering yourself to the executioner, will be the accomplishment of a great wrong. To effect an escape from these walls will be no defeat of justice. Injustice will triumph unless you do so. The hue and cry of a few weeks can be patiently borne, if it enable us to establish your innocence. To preserve your life I was prepared to suggest your escape, and commit even a legal wrong, if thereby I could rescue you from death. Thank God! oh, thank God! the moral hesitation which afflicted me has vanished. It is no longer a moral wrong, and the hour will speedily come, pray Heaven, when even stern justice will proclaim, right has been done. Blount, you say you love me. I have believed and trusted you. No girl ever placed more utter confidence in man, than I have reposed in you. I never sought to prove your love. I never shall,

through all the years to come, if we are spared to live one life together. Now, this once, once only in my existence, I ask you, if you love me, prove it : prove it by compliance with my request. Here, on my knees, I implore your consent."

And the girl triumphed.

From her bosom she drew a long, slender instrument, the blade of which was on one edge a knife, on the other a fine saw.

"Remember Hampden, darling," said Mabel with a smile. "Firmness and resolution are needed in this extremity. I know your cell better than you know it yourself, for I have been taught all that I now teach you. Yonder Gothic window is not so formidable as it seems. The iron bars are stout enough, and would resist attack. The stone tracery has centuries of age. Observe how friable it is ! The mullion which divides the window into two lights, consists, as you see, of two short lengths of stone, upon which the upper tracery rests. It will be your business to displace those stones. The iron-work will sustain the weight above ; and once the mullion is removed, there will be ample room for you to pass between the bars. This saw, such as stone-

masons use for fine work in carving, will cut through the mortar between the joints like a knife, and leave no marks to attract attention, provided you blow away the dust as you progress with your work. Be quite sure you thoroughly divide the joints with the saw, for when that is done, a child might thrust out the whole mullion. That must be done at the moment you effect your escape. The two blocks of stone will fall from the window, and light in the Castle yard beneath. Their fall will be your greatest danger. Should they make any noise on reaching the ground, attention might be awakened, though a good Providence has come to our aid even in this. There are creepers and ivy trained over the Governor's house, and over portions of the towers. Immediately beneath your window, is a small flower-bed, kept by the turnkey of the gateway. A hop-plant grows out of it, and spreads itself for a few feet over the lower wall. Push the stones out gently and carefully, and they will imbed themselves in the soft earth without the smallest noise. But before you do this, everything must be prepared for your attempted escape. The knife side of this instrument will do all you need ; but

It must be done hurriedly, at the last moment, when you have retired to rest. With it, you will cut up your bed linen and blankets into strips. These strips must be carefully tied together, so as to ensure safety in their bearing your weight. One end of the rope so made, you will secure to the iron-bars, immediately before the stone mullion is thrust from its position. Then, Blount—then not an instant's delay. Your own agility must do the rest: and you may thank your boyish training and Sir Nigel, for the athletic nimbleness you possess, on which your life will depend. I must now teach you how the buildings are arranged. Adjoining this chamber, is the exterior wall of the Castle; it abuts upon the centre of this Gateway's side. Between it and the interior corner of the Gateway, a range of modern buildings rise, flanking it, but nevertheless at a slight angle with it. The parapet and roofs of those buildings are at a distance of a few feet, but completely out of the reach of any one suspended from yonder window. You can attain them only in one way. Clinging to your rope, you must work your feet against the wall, so as to create an oscillation. Once accomplished, and the impetus gained, in a

few swings you will be able to throw your body on to the parapet, and instantly release the rope. Everything depends upon the accomplishment of this gymnastic feat. It was attempted once before in this Castle, from one of the towers overlooking the Church, and had nearly proved successful. Let us hope on a second attempt elsewhere it will succeed. If you should fail—but, no, no! I will not contemplate failure. One more preparation you will have to make. The rope required at the window need not be more than twelve feet long. You must make a second, as long as your materials will allow, for it will be required to descend from the top of the outside wall, into which the roof of the building I speak of, is fixed. This second rope you must twine around your body, and once you have attained the roof, the rest will be simple. All that you need do, is to attach the rope to the *chevaux de frise* which surmounts the wall, and lower yourself to the ground. It is right I should tell you everything has been planned by Mr Trigg; and your safety will depend upon the exact fulfilment of his directions. He has chosen the night previous to the intended execution, as safest for the attempt, simply because it seems the

most perilous. The hour is to be midnight—the watch, Mr Trigg thinks, will be more unguarded about that time. As the populace will be collecting on the opposite side of the Castle, and public curiosity attracted in that direction, it is the more probable that the Gateway front and Castle-Hill will be deserted. When the bells toll the hour of twelve, you will execute your task. Once you have reached the terrace beneath the outer wall, your fleetness must do the rest. Watch your opportunity, when all is still and quiet, to descend : then as swift as your feet can carry you, make for the Salt-Marsh, so as to avoid being seen or recognized. In a few minutes you will have traversed the Castle-Hill and descended the lane to the Freemen's Orl-grasses. Turn off direct to the ford which crosses the Laune opposite to Scale-Hall. You know the spot ? ”

“ I do.”

“ You can make no mistake ! Are you quite certain ? ”

“ I know it so familiarly, that I cannot possibly mistake.”

“ That's well,” said Mabel, “ for you must

cross the ford whether the tide is in or out. If it be out, the water is shallow enough. If otherwise, let the worst come to the worst, you can swim. There is not a quieter or more unfrequented spot round Launcester than the Scale-Hall lanes. Upon the sward, where they debouch beneath the cliffs upon the river bank, you will find friends waiting you, and Sir Nigel's saddle-horses. Your foot in the stirrups, you will be in good company, and, if all go well, beyond the reach of pursuit. Along the lanes and across the fields, avoiding the public roads, we — (I say 'we,' Blount! for I shall be there with a trembling, wakeful heart, listening for your approach and ready to accompany you)—shall ride direct to Hest-bank, the pretty little village which overlooks Morecombe Bay. Beside the break-water, Jack Laddler with the cutter will be on the lookout. To avoid suspicion, the yacht has been ordered over to Peele Castle; she is lying there now, in deep water, under cover of the ruins. Everything is prepared; the instant your foot is on board, the *Arethusa* will put to sea, and if that dancing little witch does not defy pursuit she is

unworthy her Ryde fame! Have I explained everything clearly? Do you understand precisely how you are to act?

“I do.”

“And you consent to follow out these directions to the letter?”

“For your sake, Mabel, I consent! For my own, I resolve. At the worst I can but fail.”

“Fail, Blount! You must not fail! The scheme is perfectly practicable, and it needs for its fulfilment qualities which you happily possess—nerve and an agile frame! There is one other quality necessary, which I hope you will exhibit.”

“What is that, my Mabel?”

“Hampden’s quality! Remember, Blount, I told you I should quote Hampden to you if any unforeseen event arose to need the exercise of that great virtue; unforeseen, but not unfelt, it has come. Two lives depend upon it now. Nay! not two—One! Mine is but the reflected light of yours; let anything separate us, and mine wanes and sinks into total eclipse.”

The time had too rapidly expired during which the young lovers were permitted to be alone. Their conversation was interrupted by the heavy

oaken door turning on its ponderous hinges, and admitting Mr Cowley, accompanied by the turn-key. The latter officer had come with the unwelcome intelligence their last parting must be immediately taken. Mr Cowley, knowing what was about to occur, had hastened to the cell, that he might remain with, and console the prisoner, after the last leave-taking. He was astonished with the scene he witnessed; the fears he had entertained on Mabel's account were so completely disappointed.

Calmly and resignedly she hung around Blount's neck. Pale as any lily, but unmoved by the breath of emotion, she gently pressed her lips to his, and said, "Remember Hampden! We part—we part, darling, to meet again!"

Followed by the gaze of Mr Cowley, with a resolute step she passed through the doorway,—nor turned nor looked back; but vanished down the dark corridor; and the creaking hinges turned, and the bolts fell: and the venerable man wondered!



CHAPTER VII.

THE SPIDER'S WEB BROKEN.

"'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume:
And we are weeds without it."—(*The Task*.)



REEVY had contrived his web to his perfect satisfaction. Like a bloated old spider that has fed upon the victims it had entangled in its net, and retired into a private corner under some protecting cover to digest its feast, and contemplate the radiating lines carrying successive circles of meshes to trap unwary flies and moths, so Creevy from his corner (at the Lakes, as his fair spouse had informed Mr Trigg) had contemplated, with intense satisfaction, the lines he had promoted from London, the centre of his system. They extended a long way, fastening themselves to Florence in one direction, to Launcester and Durham-Massey in another: to a palace and a prison in others.

Then as the spider weaves its enthralling network out of its own body, and has to enter into no outside contracts for its building materials, Creevy revelled in the reflection that his own clever brain had furnished the whole of the materials for spinning the elaborate web, upon which he pondered with so much satisfaction. "Ha, ha," thought Creevy—"Vampires of the law, are we?" "To be sure we are! Prowlers among graves, and blood-suckers!" He chuckled with delight as he received the various human flies that were dead in his mesh, or dying, or breaking their pretty wings in futile efforts to get free, or careering in gay attire, and whirling and buzzing about his traps, like Clara Harcourt—safe to fall into them presently, and be pounced upon, and fed upon, and blood-sucked to the last penny, or it would not be his fault.

There was Colonel Willoughby Massey. He was stiff and dead enough, he was! Then there was the young squire, the gaol-bird. He was safely caged, and about to be offered up a Creevy sacrifice! Miss Mabel too. Pretty little buzz-fly! Her wings were flapping amidst his delicate entanglements! She would be a dainty morsel, she

would! "My eyes!" thought Creevy, "what a famous dish that will be: Durham-Massey and its broad acres! Egad! that's the biggest insect of all!"

Such were the reveries of Creevy (in his Tourist disguise), as on the night preceding the coming execution, he sat with a companion in the small parlour of a low public-house upon the Quay of Launcester. It was the resort of sailors and fishermen and their female "pals,"—the especial objects of interest to Mr Malcolm Bright, chief of the Borough Constabulary, who regularly presented some of their order to the attention of the Mayor, after service on a Sunday morning, as persons claiming an introduction to that functionary, in virtue of their being "found drunk and disorderly in the streets."

Creevy had selected this out-of-the-way retreat in order to avoid the crowded taverns of the town, which from the hour of midnight were a blaze of light, driving a roaring trade in spirituous comforts for the multitude.

Creevy found in Launcester, upon this occasion, a fascination and attraction which were irresistible. For himself he was indifferent, because

he was a stranger in the land, and in ordinary costume would have passed unnoticed and unknown. Not so his companion and his victim, Geoffrey Tempest. He dared not trust that individual out of his sight at such a season. Creevy's nerves were equal to any emergency. He felt anxious about his "friend." The hanging of a brother might be a trial to his inexperienced mind, and it was safer, more prudent, to have Geoffrey under his own eye. Having resolved to be at Launcester on an occasion of such peculiar interest, he had summoned Geoffrey from London to meet him there. In his case disguise was absolutely necessary. So the two were seated together, waiting the event.

Creevy had calculated rightly ; Geoffrey was not safe. He was not safe from himself. However much a morose disposition had triumphed over him in envy and hatred to his brother, it had not altogether vitiated his heart. Conscience was not so seared that he could reconcile himself without emotion to see his own brother executed, however much ambition, and the thought of succeeding to Sir Nigel's estates, might have made the demise of Blount in any natural and legiti-

mate manner, an acceptable event to him. Remorse had racked and tortured him. The weeks which had passed over his head since Colonel Massey was so foully murdered, had wrought a terrible change in Geoffrey. He had shunned the shedding of blood. When Creevy drew him into the attack upon the Colonel, dreading the desperate character of that scoundrel, although he was unable to resist his enticement, he had protested against any attempt upon their victim's life. Not his the hands which had done the deed. Not his the will or intent that it should be perpetrated. With such reflections he had striven to console himself. It was sorry consolation, and conscience would not be so comforted. He was the accomplice of the assassin! He had attacked the dead man. Though not the murderer, he knew himself participator in the murder. Then, again, he had with silence and consent, seen an innocent man accused, convicted; worst of all, that man his own brother. Malice might have reconciled him to such a miscarriage of justice; nay, it had done so, for the moment. With a smile of satisfaction he had seen his brother taken from the felon's dock; but

a few days more, and all smiles vanished from his face. Natural revulsion of feeling ensued, and life became torture. What remained for him?—confession! He pondered it by night as he lay broad awake staring into space, and ever beholding Lonsdale Priory,—the Chapel,—the deed of blood! He meditated it by day! But as often as he heard the circumstances discussed, and the violent epithets by which they were characterized among the office clerks, the busy people in the streets, the acquaintance he met from day to day; his heart sank within him! He had not courage to blazon before the world his own enormity. So day by day passed on, one frightful thought gnawing at his heart, burning in his brain, taking horrible shape and form before his eyes, haunting him everywhere! He hungered, but could not eat. When he tasted food, it nauseated his palate, and he fancied it was human flesh! There was no resource for him but confession, or dissipation. Too great a coward for the one, he plunged into the other. Recklessly rushing forth in search of self-forgetfulness, the wildest scenes of debauch became his constant haunts. Wherever the orgies of

the metropolis were held, he was a celebrant. The wine cup was ever at his lips; and the Bacchanal rites once again were celebrated, which bring in close alliance the dagger and the bowl!

If such a fiend in human form as Creevy, could possibly have been shocked, if he could have been capable of one kind feeling, he must surely have experienced a pang when he beheld his victim. But Creevy was not amenable to any such-like "woman's weakness." He was simply disgusted, and forthwith rallied and rated Geoffrey upon his babyishness. They were seated together in the small parlour, fortifying themselves for the night. Their fortifications were constructed of glass, provisioned with brandy. Creevy kept up a constant fire of toasts, and exhausted his magazine of coarse anecdotes and filthy jests upon Geoffrey. But Geoffrey was beyond the range of all the light artillery of raillery. Then Creevy unmasked his heavy battery of ferocity and bullying! He had recourse to threats. He swore through that wicked muzzle of his obdurate mouth, awful oaths. He cursed the weakness which Geoffrey exhibited, and he warned him against daring to display it any further. "Your

beastly coward face is alone enough to confess your guilt," he said. "And do you suppose I'll run any risks through your sheepish chops? Take care how you deal with Cusack Creevy, my boy, or trifle with his confidence. Hang yourself, and welcome, if you like it. Go and swing where your brother will swing in a few hours hence, if you fancy the amusement; but by —" (and here he swore a frightful oath, which invoked the wounds of Christ to record his resolution) "if you ever breathe a syllable, or drop a hint, or look a look that turns suspicion towards *me*, I'll kill you as I would shoot a cur in the dog-days!"

This friendly and familiar conversation was interrupted by the entrance of two of the regular frequenters of the Mermaid Tavern. They were both seafaring men, one belonging to a ship (a trader to the West Indies) lying alongside the Quay; the other much more dapper in his nautical attire, wearing a glazed hat, with blue band, and on it in golden letters the word "Arethusa." It was well for Geoffrey Tempest he was so cunningly disguised, otherwise he would have been instantly recognized by one of the crew of Sir Nigel's yacht.

The sailors were conversing about the execution. "I suppose you came up to Launcester a purpose to see the young 'un hung, Bill," said the West Indian sailor. "I thought as you was at Ryde about this time. Dash my eyes, Bill! this must be a pretty piece of business to your old Governor." Then addressing himself generally to Creevy and Geoffrey, he added for public information, "Poor old gentleman: there's ne'er a man in these parts, I can tell you, more respected than Sir Nigel Tempest."

"So I hear," said Creevy, with concerned voice, deeply sympathetic for Sir Nigel's domestic troubles.

Bill Kittywake was not content with the imputation that he had come to Launcester to witness the death of his young master. He protested angrily against any such supposition.

"What's he doing here then?" asked his companion.

"With the *Arethusa*," said Bill.

"The *Arethusa*!" exclaimed the sailor, with surprise; "why, Bill, when did she come round?"

"We've been a-lying in Morecombe Bay for weeks past," said Bill Kittywake, "the Gov'nor

and Mr Blount were to have gone a cruise in her this summer; but ever since this here murder, she's bin a dancing like a cork in the Bay, all for nou't, until yesterday. Our master, Jack Laddler, thee knows, came off from shore yesterday, and put us all ship-shape in a wink. We're under orders for sailing, I'll be bound."

Both Creevy and Geoffrey became interested in this conversation. Creevy thought he saw another fly coming in contact with his web, and he prepared for a pounce.

"Is Sir Nigel going in her?" asked the spider.

"That's more than I knows of," said Bill Kittywake. "Any hows, some un's a going, for the crew's under orders to be every soul o' them aboard this night. Some on us has got leave for a few hours to come up to Launcester, as Master Laddler's in town hisself. We meets him at Hest-Bank to-night to put off in the cutter."

To-night! thought Creevy to himself, then Laddler's either a dissipated old dog, or there's something up. I must squeeze the brains of this fellow.

"I hear she's a beautiful yacht, the Arethusa,"

said Creevy to Bill Kittywake. "Lovely lines, they do say."

"That she has," said Bill.

"And she is lying in the Bay," continued Creevy; "I should like to see her uncommonly. I suppose if I were to take a run down to look at her, there would be no objection."

"Well, as fur that there," said Bill, "I cannot say. You'd have to ask Master Laddler's leave; but you must look precious sharp, any ways, for she's sailed over to Peele yesterday; and from all as I can see, likely enough she'll be down Channel before long."

"Where is Peele?" asked Creevy, for he was a stranger to Launcester and its neighbourhood.

"Don't you know Peele Castle?" said Bill, "at the foot of Walney Isle, out by the mouth of the Bay."

"On the opposite side, I think you said?"

"To be sure it is: under Furness Point, 'Point of Comfort,' as we sailors call it, when we turn in there tight and snug from the Irish Sea!"

"So! It would be a terrible long way to go," said Creevy.

"Cross the Bay in a boat, soon enough," sug-

gested Bill, "or take the rail to Ulverstone and Dalton; or, quicker still, go over sands, if the tide was out. We're obliged to wait for tide to serve, and that's the reason why Master Laddler has ordered the cutter along-side Hest-Bank break-water to-night.

"It's a fine clear night enough," continued Bill, looking at his watch, "and I must be on the move, for I've a matter of five mile to walk to the Hest. If you does come over to Peele, ask for Bill Kittywake, Sir; and I'll show you the Arethusa."

Bill and his companion drank off their glasses of grog, lighted their short pipes, and departed.

Geoffrey breathed freely when the sailors had gone. He had sat in terror of recognition, for in all disguises, external or internal, there is no disguise to him who assumes it! He stands before those he dupes or deceives, in his own observation, undisguisedly, himself alone. Geoffrey had preserved a profound silence. Bill Kittywake scarcely looked at him; and yet in choking terror, every time the sailor's eye moved about the room, he expected to be recognized by the man whom he had long known as his uncle's servant. The in-

formation which Creevy had pumped out of Kitty-wake, Geoffrey could have given him in half a minute, had he dared to open his lips.

When the sound of the sailors' footsteps had died away in distance, Creevy interrogated Geoffrey as to his opinion regarding the movements of the Arethusa. He arrived at the natural conclusion that his uncle had resolved to leave Warfdale, and was probably only delaying until he knew his favourite nephew was no more. "I know my uncle well enough," said Geoffrey, "he will leave that place instantly, and I'll be bound never be seen in the county again. His proud heart will be broken,—poor—poor old man!"

Creevy protested against "any of that bosh," and rang for more brandy-and-water. He made a butt of Geoffrey, and congratulated him upon becoming a man of sentiment. No doubt he would presently be a Reformed Rake. "Hopeful youth," said Creevy, "who knows but we may see you exhibited at a piety Tea-Meeting as a rare specimen of instantaneous conversion?"

"For God's sake, Creevy," interposed the wretched man, "don't talk blasphemously. Blackened enough with iniquity my heart may

be, but I am not yet so black as to be dead to all sense of right and wrong."

His head was getting excited, the fumes of the spirits had reached it; and although he had no intent to travel on the high road to drunkenness, he had arrived at that stage, where the fire had strengthened his nerves, warmed his brain, and aroused him out of the lethargy of despair into which he had, during past weeks, glided.

"There may be more truth than you think for, Creevy, in your taunting words! There has been an instant in your life and mine, which has left its mark upon my soul for ever. I wish it *had converted* me; but it has not confirmed me, be sure of that! Even in hell there may be a deeper damnation in the devilishness of devils! I'll play your wicked game no further! Threaten me as you please! Shoot me like a dog, as you say, if you dare. Do it—do it, Creevy; do it now, here, this moment, and I'll thank you! Put me out of the misery of a life which you have made a living hell. Devils can quote Scripture, so can I. 'There's no peace, saith my God, for the wicked!'

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Creevy, "that's fine, that's very fine! You'd have made a splendid

actor, you would ! What a situation for a Shore-ditch melodrama ! But we're not playing here, my boy,—not playing the fool, mind you ; so sit you down : sit you down now" (beginning to be really alarmed as to what Geoffrey might say or do next, and considering it more prudent, perhaps, to coax him than to bully) ; "take your liquor like a man, and let's be comfortable and quiet."

"Comfortable !" ejaculated Geoffrey, with a hoarse chuckle in his throat ; "there's no comfort, no peace, I say, for me. Quiet ! yes ; I'll try to keep quiet, Creevy. I'll keep as quiet as I can when the air smells of blood, and the world's all a shambles, and you and I are walking about like butchers, and the fiend cries, 'Kill, kill, kill.' It's always before me, you see. If I shut my eyes, I see it all the same. There's the old man, Creevy, who never did us any wrong ; there's the ruin and the tomb, and the grass saturated with blood, and the shriek, 'Mabel, Mabel,' and the voices of people ringing in the air, 'Murder.' Ugh ! Away, away, horrible sight ! More drink, more drink ; give me more drink." He sunk into his seat, and clasping his brow between his

folded hands, stared wildly and idiotically into Creevy's face.

This scene was more than even the self-possessed Creevy was prepared to deal with. The only expedient which he could, at the moment, think of, was to indulge Geoffrey, though to do so might prove dangerous. Happily, fatigue, the liquor already imbibed, and the heat of the small room, gradually overcame his victim, and he sank into fitful snatches of partial slumber, partial unconsciousness.

When Creevy had satisfied himself that Geoffrey was wearied into repose, he bethought himself a little sleep might be refreshing. There were several hours on hand before daylight, and before the event which he had come to Lancaster to see completed. Planting his chair near the door, and resting his legs upon another, the "Lake excursionist" took his repose. Both the men must have eventually fallen into deep sleep, for it was broad daylight before they woke, and their waking at the time they did, was caused by a trampling of feet outside, and the sound of voices in confused conversation, mingled with shouts and expletives. Creevy jumped up from

his seat, and having collected himself, roused his companion, and bid him be on his guard. This done, he looked out into the passage to learn the cause of such a strange disturbance, for even Creevy, with all his coolness, was not free from apprehension. He soon learned the truth, which astounded and discomfited him. The mob, like an overflowing stream rending its banks, had burst upon the town, and coursed down the streets and alleys in a deluge of numbers, roaring imprecations as it went long. Creevy instantly gathered the startling intelligence that Blount Tempest had escaped from the Castle; the gallows was defrauded, and worst of all, the victim-fly had broken from the spider's mesh, and was free!

Stunned with surprise, and boiling over with enraged disappointment, Creevy was still sufficiently himself to perceive that a crisis had come upon him, which threatened to mar and break up all his plans and schemes. The truth, of which he had as yet entertained no suspicion, instantly flashed across his mind:—"The yacht, the *Arethusa*,—to aid the escape must be the purpose of her lying at Peele: the cutter too,—the crew meeting Master Laddler at that place—what's its name? yes, yes, Hest-

Bank. I see it all now," said Creevy to Geoffrey, upon whom the amazing intelligence had produced the most sobering effect. Geoffrey did not venture to speak. Some minutes elapsed before he could realize the intelligence, and when he did, Creevy was the more perplexed by seeing him stagger and drop upon his knees, with his hands flung into the air, and his head falling back, so that his features were turned upwards to the ceiling, while his lips moved with inaudible words.

"Come, come," said Creevy, passionately seizing him by the shoulders, and shaking him; "come, you drunken sot, rouse yourself up, and collect what senses are left to you; you'll need them all now. Get up, I say."

Creevy was delighted to find the instantaneous effect which his line of action, as he thought, produced. Geoffrey did rise, and seemed, moreover, as calm and as self-possessed as Creevy could have wished. Great had been the error of that person. It was from no helpless powerlessness of limb that Geoffrey Tempest had sunk to the earth. Though the sleep in which his senses had been steeped, might not have completely sobered

him, the intelligence which had greeted his ears on waking up, had. His bent knees, uplifted hands, and murmuring lips, were noted and understood by that All-seeing Eye which sees not as man sees. He and his God had too long been estranged. Geoffrey would not have dared to pray. A prayer on his lips he would have considered profanation. But the voice of thanksgiving for another's sake, even he might utter, and in the courts of heaven that voice might be heard and welcomed. "Thank God! thank God! thank God!" was the inarticulated utterance of the blood-stained soul, exulting in the interposition of a kind Providence which had snatched the innocent from destruction. Creevy had not a suspicion that in his own presence, and before his eyes, that manifestation of the spiritual power of God, at which he had sneered, and regarding which, Blount in his prison, had talked and speculated, was, with a miraculous efficacy, to operate. He who has declared "I make peace and create evil," had permitted its creation, for the conversion of a human being, stubbornly and perversely wicked. Through the instrumentality of those sins which were literally red with blood, like

crimson, it was overruled the wicked heart of Geoffrey Tempest should be purged from its iniquity, and become white as snow.

Absent from London and from association of late with Geoffrey, Creevy could not be aware (nor would he have appreciated it, if he could) that a brooding spirit had, for weeks past, been agitating the chaos of conscience in Geoffrey's breast, which he had stubbornly struggled to resist, and by the most desperate resorts to quell, with which he had wrestled through the deepest darkness of his life's night, as the Patriarch did with the angel, until the breaking of the day ; but Creevy was present, and witnessed that break of day, the triumph of a mysterious influence, which turned a being striving after sin, from the power of Satan unto God ; and, moving over the face of the deep waters of trouble beneath which his soul had been plunged in moral darkness, commanded there should be light ! The sanded floor of that wretched parlour in the Mermaid Tavern, had become his Peniel !

Eyes had Creevy, but he had not seen. Things transpired before his gaze of which his

mind took no cognizance. He was surprised at Geoffrey's sobriety, the calmness and quietness of his demeanour, the unresisting manner in which he heard and attended to all that Creevy had to say. It was evident the game for Creevy to play was to overtake the fugitive, and assist the authorities in his re-capture. Whatever he might do indirectly, Creevy perceived he could take no active part in such a proceeding. It would attract observation, bring his name before the public, and might end in exciting suspicion. He had but one string to his bow, and with that he was compelled to shoot.

“Now, look’ee here, Master Geoffrey, I can put the Town Bobbies on his track quick enough, without their asking questions. I can tell ’em what I heard the sailors say at the Mermaid, and for once in my life, I shall be telling the truth, which will be funny enough, won’t it? But I can’t go in chase, and as there’s no help for it, you must. Are you ready to set off in pursuit of your brother?”

“Quite,” answered Geoffrey.

“You know this place, this Hest-Bank, do you?”

"Ever since I was a child: the sward, the break-water, it is all familiar to me."

"Good! excellent," said Creevy; "and you'll do your very best to come up with him, supposing he has fled in that direction?"

"That I will!"

"I suppose boats are to be had?"

"Plenty! But the tide may be out."

"Well, what then?" said Creevy, anxiously.

"In that case," answered Geoffrey, "there is no choice but to go oversands by Cartmell to Furness, and ride on to the Point of Comfort (the place Kittywake spoke of); a boat will take me out directly to Peele."

"Will that way take you much longer?"

"It depends whether I am delayed at Hest-Bank. If they have horses or a conveyance at the inn, supposing the tide to be out, I shall be able to get along as quickly oversands as I could sail by boat to Peele, if the tide were at the full. Stay! The tide will be out. Kittywake said the cutter was to be lying off at one o'clock, did he not?"

"He did!"

"The Bay will be a mass of sand-banks by this

time of morning. I have no choice but to ride oversands."

"The quicker you are off, then, the better. Give us your hand, Master Geoffrey, and listen to me. We are in the same boat, my boy, and must pull together. Self-preservation is a precious strong instinct, and I have no fear of you, because I know what's what, and you won't hang yourself if you can help it! All's safe there. You'll have a ticklish game to play, nevertheless, and you must play it boldly."

"That I will," said Geoffrey, resolutely.

"If you come up with the yacht, and catch her before she sails, you'll stop her."

"I will."

"And you'll give the mur——! dash it, we know better! but he's guilty in the eye of the law for all that! A runaway from prison ought to be given up. You'll see the guilty man"—("you know!" said Creevy with a horrible wink and leer) "safely secured, and in the hands of the police?"

"You may depend upon me, I will."

"I may depend upon you! I know I may, my boy! Your own neck and Sir Nigel's estates are good for that! Whatever comes or goes, I shall

be sure to know by to-morrow papers, so don't you write. When I have put the beakers here upon the scent, I shall be off to the little village by the Thames as fast as the express can carry me, and prepared for any mischance. Should he escape you, he shan't escape me. The yacht is bound for the continent somewhere or other, and I'll have every port in Europe dodged, but I'll come up with him! Would another glass do you good, my boy?"

"No, Creevy, not a drop more. I'll neither taste food nor drink drink, until my purpose is accomplished."

"By Jove! my younker! I do believe you are a brick after all!" Creevy squeezed the cold hands which he held in his grasp, and the two men sallied forth into the street, where they instantly parted. Creevy turned his steps townward, to the market-place. Geoffrey hurried away over the Laune, direct across roads and fields for Hest-Bank.





CHAPTER VIII.

MORNING MEDITATIONS.

"But as there lives a true God in the heaven,
So is there true religion here on earth:
By nature? No, by grace: not got, but given;
Inspired, not taught: from God a second birth;
God dwelleth near about us, even within
Working the goodness, censuring the sin."



TONGUE of land, some four or five miles in breadth, washed upon one side by the waters of Morecombe Bay and on the other by the river Laune, is interposed between the town of Launcester and the sea. It is occupied for the most part by farms, and by fishermen, whose white-washed cottages, thatched roofs, shrimping nets, and tackle, dot the peninsula, cleanly, pleasant, picturesque to the eye, among the fields radiant with clover and with gorgeous poppy flowers. Nestling beneath a line of tall elms, and overhung with sycamores, surrounded by farm-fields which are protected by embankments from the overflowing of the Laune,

lies Scale-Hall, near which Mabel had appointed her rendezvous with Blount. Everything had gone well with him. The fine saw, concealed about his person, and used at convenient opportunities, had quickly done its work.

Thanks to the antique masonry of John o'Gaunt's Tower, the stone-work of the Gothic window which had to be operated upon, was in most favourable condition for the hand of the operator. The two blocks were successfully divided between the joints: and owing to the fineness of the saw-blade there was no perceptible trace of the process. When the night actually arrived, Blount's limbs trembled under him. His anxiety became terrible, for instead of the watch over him being relaxed, it seemed to be more constant. Happily for him the turbulent multitude which had collected to witness his execution, were the direct, but, unconscious, instruments of effecting his escape.

Midnight had arrived, and passed. His keeper was in the cell. Movement was impossible. Owing, however, to the denseness and turbulence of the crowd, unusual measures of precaution were deemed necessary in opening the vaulted

passages beneath the courts of law, wherein the machinery of death was kept, and from which it had to be moved to the appointed place. During the brief period which this proceeding occupied, the assistance of the warders and turnkeys was called into requisition. Blount's keeper was hastily summoned from the cell, and the golden opportunity offered itself.

When he heard the retreating footsteps die away in the distance, Blount instantly collected his extemporized ropes from within his bed, and sprang to the window. With scarce an effort the stone-work gave way. He pushed out one block first, and heard it bury itself, almost noiselessly, in the flower-bed beneath. There was danger in letting the second fall, which would certainly dash against its predecessor: so knowing there was no guard near the cell, he deliberately lifted it from its place, and deposited it against the door, with a catch against the edge of a flag stone in the floor, whereby, should he be disturbed, an entrance would be obstructed; and, until something gave way, or the door was burst open, absolutely prevented. To that lucky after-thought he owed his life. The window was now open.

Ample space between the iron bars was secured by the removal of the mullion. Having wound the larger linen rope around his body, and fastened the other to the stanchion, he looked forth through the shadowy gloom of night, down the tower wall, and at the adjoining roof which he had to attain. "Hampden, Hampden," he repeated: for the perilous venture needed all the nerve and resolution he could summon to his aid.

In reconnoitering the wall previous to lowering himself, he was surprised and greatly encouraged, by observing a small loop-window a few feet below, the existence of which was previously unknown to him. It was the light for the passage in the thickness of the wall whereby his cell was approached. It would give him a footing, and assist in the oscillatory motion, whereby he could alone contrive to swing towards the parapet of the adjoining building. Scarcely had he informed himself upon these points, when the sound of footsteps on the winding staircase apprized him the keepers were returning.

There was not an instant to be lost. He clung to the bars and the rope. He lowered his body gently through the window, and in doing so,

heard the noise of the revolving wards of his prison-door; then the resistance,—the heavy battering at the door,—the vain effort of the warder to force it. Everything was audible to him as he hung from the window in mid air, setting his body in motion, and beginning to swing backward and forward. He could hear the alarm given, and the footsteps of men hurrying within the tower, up the corridors to his cell door. But for the strong block of stone firmly fixed against it, he must have been re-captured. The small loop-window (too narrow within for any one to look through, and which might have led to his discovery, for it was directly opposite his prison-door) afforded him all the aid he needed to propel his body to and fro.

Nervously and rapidly he gained the motion, conscious that every second was a matter of life and death to him, and at last, making the rope describe an arc of several feet, he was successful in swinging himself upon the roof of the buildings adjoining the tower, at the very moment when, with a tremendous burst and crash, he heard the cell door give way, and the warders rush into the empty chamber. Without turning to look about him, he hurried across the lead roof, tied

his other cord to the frame-work of the spikes which bristled along the wall, and having given the rope a double turn around his wrist, vaulted over the angry iron-teeth, and slid down to the terrace below. Away and away, into the gloom, into the night, and away and away beyond houses and down the hill-side lane, he sped until he had reached the marsh-land. There he first stopped to take breath and listen. Not a sound could be heard. No footsteps: no voices. He was free!

A few minutes sufficed to take him to the ford over the Laune. It was high-water: but what of that? Dashing into the stream he was quickly landed on the opposite shore, where, under cover of the night, he found, as arranged, his trembling Mabel, his good friend Trigg, and his uncle's horses, waiting him.

The delay had been almost too much for Mabel, nothing but the agitation of suspense having sustained her. When she saw Blount safe and free, the young girl's strength broke down, and like a statue hurled from its pedestal, she lay prostrate. There was anxiety enough for Mr Trigg without having to encounter this additional source of trouble. Already they were more than an hour beyond

the appointed time, and if the tide should be gone out when they reached Hest-Bank, fresh difficulties, and perhaps fatal ones, might overtake them. Imploringly he appealed to Mabel not to give way to any weakness at such a moment of anxiety, but to collect herself, and remember how much depended upon their instant departure. She obeyed the summons as readily as she could, though Blount had to raise an almost dead weight into her saddle. But the fresh night air and the consciousness that he was at her side, speedily revived her, and she rode along, "determined," as she said, "to give Mr Trigg no more trouble." Arrived at Hest-Bank, the cutter was found lying alongside, and Jack Laddler in a terrible state of impatience. He alone was in the secret of the plot; but when the crew saw Blount step in the boat, they could scarcely refrain a shout of joy, on recognizing their young master.

"Now, my hearties," said Jack, "pull away from shore, and hoist sail in a trivet."

The groom in care of the horses watched the retreating boat, until in the darkness it passed out of sight. Silence and secresy had been imposed upon him until the yacht had got safely away.

He was to put up at Hest-Bank until the morning. From the rural inn upon the hill, he would be able easily, in the morning light, with the aid of a telescope, to examine the ruins of Peele Castle at the mouth of the Bay, and if there were no trace of the yacht, he was to return at once to Warfdale Tower, and make known that Blount was safely transported beyond reach of the law.

In these days of iron and steam it is difficult to escape from the screaming whistle, and find a retreat retaining its primitive simplicity. English sea-side places southward, are simply London super-mare; northward, they are Manchester, and Bradford, and Birmingham, taking a wash. At each and all, the eyes which long for something rural and bucolic, are haunted with the mimicry of hideous modern London; the everlasting "Terraces," and "Gardens," and "Rows," enamelled, like Madame Rachel's beauties, with facings of bilious-complexioned cement—shams, all of them!

For those who lisp and dawdle through existence, and love to show off their tailor's art upon parades where men and women do congre-

gate, it may be charming to be dressed “up to the nines” when they sally forth to inquire what the wild waves are saying ; but to those who live busily and anxiously amidst the crowd and turmoil of life, there is intense delight in creeping into their shell at some out-of-the-way hamlet, where no monster chimneys intrude to belch forth their nasty smoke, where there is no perpetual coming and going, no business nor yet fashion ; where a shooting jacket, stout walking stick, gloveless hands, and strong Balmoral boots, assert the ease and relaxation of the owner ; where cows wander along the lanes and crop the hedge-row roses ; where the air is perfumed with the scent of the fragrant peat-fire, and the white cottages with moss-tufted thatch, are the unsophisticated homes of labourers and fishermen, whose wives sit about the doors, mending the nets, or emptying the shrimping baskets, while rosy-checked lads gambol about their knees ; where the sky is unblotched with palls of smoke, and the heavens are clear and blue ; where peace, quiet, contentment, reign ; and where,—oh, God be praised for such sweet luxury !—the tenant of a city can escape from the strait-jacket constraints of society, and

stretch himself at full length upon the beach, and be a child again with his own children, throwing pebbles into the rolling serf, and rejoice in the contemplation of an unmanufactured scene of sea and cliff; valley and stream; mountain and moss; escaped from the meddling touch of man, and preserved simple, rustic, lovely, as it came from the hand of Him who made it.

Such a place is the village of Hest-Bank.

“Away from the world, and its toils, and its cares.”

It consists of a little group of cottages, each seated in the midst of a smiling garden; shady lanes, undulating lands, rich foliage, surround it. The fields behind it, from which children gather mushroom harvests, run out to a cliff overhanging the shore; in front, the hill descends steeply to a long sward skirting the beach, and when the tide goes out, miles of sand-banks are revealed in the basin of the Bay. A breakwater, whose huge blocks of stone have fallen from their high estate, mourns over its decay, with long dishevelled locks of sea-tang hanging about its head; tossed to and fro by the waves, as if some one that was dead floated there. The crab, like an antiquary full of

curious inquiries, crawls peeringly from stone to stone; and the limpet Arabs of the ocean plains, pitch their white tents amongst its ruins. This decaying remnant of a former period is the solitary landmark on the shore beneath Hest-Bank. From it, Blount Tempest had embarked in the cutter which carried him to Peele Castle. This confused pile of stones serves a purpose still. It points out the spot at which travellers going oversands, descend from the land to the bed of the Bay. In former times the old mail coaches passed this way, under the direction of guides between Hest-Bank and Cartmel. But of late years, travelling and traffic have been diverted; the guides no longer exist; the sand-bank route has become almost deserted, and proportionately more dangerous. Scarcely a summer passes, but some lives are sacrificed in hazarding a passage from Ulverstone to Cartmel, and across the great sand-bank to Hest-Bank.

When Sir Nigel's groom had lost sight of the cutter as it leaped into the misty gloom which shrouded the Bay, he turned the horses' heads, mounted the hill, and rousing the groom at the village inn, stabled his steeds, while he himself retired to rest. It was about three o'clock before

he had put up the animals. Before eight, Geoffrey Tempest arrived in the village in pursuit of his brother. As soon as he had attained the hill, and looked forth upon the lovely Bay, backed by the Lake mountains, he perceived his fears were realized. The tide was completely out. Miles and miles of sands stretched before his view. His only chance was to complete his journey oversands. Then he bethought him of his disguise, and he shuddered with disgust as he remembered the person with whom it was associated, and the dread crime with which it was connected. He dispensed with the false hair and beard ; and washing his face in a way-side brook, resumed, as far as his habiliments would permit, his ordinary appearance. This done, he repaired to the inn, and mounted the stairs to a well-known room, in which, when a child, he had passed many a happy hour. It was known as the "Glass-Room." The name so given it, arose from the construction of the apartment, which, looking out upon the Bay, had been built with two of its sides entirely fitted with windows, like the front of a conservatory. An extensive prospect of sea and mountain, upland and vale, had by this means been secured.

Entering this room, the years which were gone for ever, the childish, innocent years of his boyhood, crowded upon his recollection. Every article of furniture was familiar to him. Many and many a day had he spent in that room. In yonder corner the bats and wickets used to be stowed.

There had hung the small nets with which he and Blount used to go fishing. In that window his pet thrush and canary-bird had sang their songs. How often in that big arm-chair had Sir Nigel sat (his long Dolland in his hands), watching the fishing boats, or the *Arethusa* as she swung lazily at her anchor.

If the fields were a natural resort for the meditations of the Patriarch at eventide, they had proved equally so to Geoffrey Tempest during the time he was traversing them on his road from Launcester to Hest-Bank. His life was epitomized in an hour. Its events—its wickedness, envy, and malice, last of all, its crime, were sternly reviewed. Cato the Censor could not have been more severe than was Geoffrey in his examination of himself. Not a single fault was palliated or extenuated. To himself he denounced himself.

To his God, with trembling lips and streaming eyes, he turned with the repentant confessions of a broken and a contrite heart. Just in proportion to the enormity of his crime was his resolution to do justice and to reveal the whole truth. Conscience had mounted her throne, and reigned supreme. "If I can only come up with them before they sail," he ejaculated, looking wistfully across the sands to the mouth of the Bay, where, upon the horizon, the black outline of Peele Castle was already visible; "if I can only overtake them, all may yet be well. No matter about consequences; it is life for life now, and sweet though life may be, its sweetness has gone from me for ever. Yes! Creevy, you *may* depend upon my word, *the guilty man shall be secured and in the hands of the police!* Let justice be done, whatever it cost."

The morning sun breaking over the Yorkshire hills and throwing its slanting rays across the head of Ingleborough, sent the light leaping from mountain to mountain, and made the sands sparkle like myriads of diamonds. Geoffrey was not insensible to the glorious panorama upon which he gazed. Its brightness and gladness flung him back upon himself. How terrible the

contrast! A scene, how lovely, how peaceful, how beautiful without! within his heart, how dark, and troubled, and stormy! Impatient of delay, he summoned the inn servant to inquire for horses or a vehicle to take him oversands. None were to be had. There was not an animal in the stable, except the landlady's small pony, which was useless for the purpose. Unsatisfied, Geoffrey issued forth to the stables to see for himself. On entering, the first person he encountered was his uncle's groom. Both stood astonished: one thoroughly ashamed. Though all disguise was removed from his head and face, Geoffrey was keenly sensitive regarding the strange attire in which he stood before his uncle's servant. The corded jacket, the cadger's cap, the labourer's clothing in which his limbs were cased, struck the groom with amazement.

"Master Geoffrey! Sir!" said the groom, "how you took me aback, to be sure. Who'd a' thought on seeing you here, Sir, at this time o' day, and in those clothes, too! What has you been at, Master Geoffrey? What 'ud Sir Nigel say? But howsume'er it be, you've come too late, Sir. They're gone this six hour, good."

“Who are gone, Williams?” said Geoffrey, catching at his words; “is Blount gone?”

“To be sure he have, Sir, and Mr Trigg along of him.”

“Are they gone to Peele?”

“In course they have. You must know that well enough,” said the groom, “or you’d not a’ been here, Master Geoffrey. We understand one another, but not a word to any one until they’re safe away.”

Geoffrey perceived the groom imagined he was in the secret of his brother’s proceedings. Without undeceiving him, he left him to imagine the costume in which he appeared had been assumed to avoid public observation (as indeed it had), and he informed the groom he had been in pursuit of his brother, hoping to overtake him before he started.

“I have information, Williams,” he proceeded, “of the most vital importance. My brother is innocent. I know it. I can prove it! His life may depend upon my coming up with him. Are not these my uncle’s horses?”

“So they be, Master Geoffrey. I was just a getting ready to set out for Warfdale.”

“Saddle one of them instantly,” said Geoffrey.

“Nothing could have been more providential than my meeting you here.”

“My orders was to go straight home, Master Geoffrey.”

“Do you hear me, Williams?” answered Geoffrey, impetuously, “my brother’s life depends upon my overtaking him. I will be responsible for your disobeying your orders. Do as I tell you, and instantly.”

The groom surrendered. The horses should finish their feed, and he would bring them round as quickly as possible. “I will wait in the Glass Room,” said Geoffrey. “But look sharp, Williams, for every instant’s delay is like an age to me.”

Geoffrey returned to the Glass Room, and closed the door and fastened it. A few moments of leisure were left to him, perhaps the last in freedom and security he would ever enjoy. In his brief solitude he fell upon his knees, and uttered a prayer—a prayer of confession, of repentance, of petition to the Most High, for mercy! He called upon God to witness the fulness with which he would reveal the truth.

No thought of self should intrude upon the fearless confession he would make. Selfishness

had been the root of the abundant harvest of crime which he had reaped. God should be his judge how utterly he would cast it forth from his heart. "Mercy, mercy on me, a sinner," was the piteous cry which he raised with uplifted hands to the great mercy-seat.

Never did human heart with tears and anguish and groans pour forth in deeper sincerity the language of confession and repentance, than did Geoffrey's as he knelt, closeted in that room. Before he had risen from his knees, he was interrupted by the groom knocking at the door.

"Come in, Williams," he cried ; but remembering the door was locked, he undid it: and presented to the servant a spectacle so strange—a face so flushed with emotion, and eyes so bleared with tears, that the kind-hearted fellow was greatly concerned.

"Master Geoffrey, Sir! Good lord, Sir, what be the matter with you, Master Geoffrey! Do tell us, Master Geoffrey. Can I do summut for you?"

"No, Williams, I thank you! No!"—and with a deep sigh, he added, "No one can do anything for me!"

“Stay,” he continued, bethinking himself, “you may do something, though not for me ;” and he pulled out his pocket-book, from which he drew a packet, secured with several seals.

“You see this packet,” he proceeded. “It contains information which I alone could give. There is no time now for delay, or I should have liked to add something more to it. Give me that pen, Williams, I can write a line outside.”

He wrote—“My brother Blount *is* innocent. I go to Peele to declare his innocence. I shall tell Mr Trigg where to gain the evidence he requires. Under the same roof the plot against your property and the Colonel’s life was hatched.

“When you receive this, I shall be ——, God only knows where ; but I implore you with my last words to pardon and forgive me for having conspired to injure you.

“G. T.”

“Hest-Bank, Monday morning, 8 o’clock.”

Williams had given no details of the occurrences which had transpired under his own observation a few hours previously, because he presumed Geoffrey Tempest was acquainted with them. Geoffrey on his part asked no questions, for he was

sufficiently acquainted with the facts to answer his purposes. So it happened that Miss Massey's name was never mentioned in their conversation ; and the groom received his orders without ever intimating to Geoffrey that Miss Massey had accompanied Blount to the Arethusa.

"Can you read, Williams?" asked Geoffrey.

"I wish I could, Sir : but I canna!"

"Never mind! It is of no consequence. Take this packet direct to Durham-Massey. If you cannot see Miss Massey, deliver it into Miss Lawson's hands. Mind, you deliver it *yourself*, and quickly; and to no other human being."

"Then you don't need me along with you?" asked Williams.

"Certainly not. I will take care of the horse I ride, and send or bring it home. You get to Durham as fast as you can go; and deliver my packet."

The packet was directed "To Miss Massey, Durham-Massey." Williams was ignorant of that fact, and of the nature of the external postscript which Geoffrey added. In delivering it to the groom Geoffrey observed, "I have written here to tell them that my brother Blount is innocent."

The groom danced about the floor, and snapped his fingers with as much hilarity as if he had been executing a jig. "I may miss the *Arethusa*; but there is no reason for any delay in the people at Warfdale and Durham knowing that Blount is innocent. Tell the news the instant you arrive! Tell all the people I told it you. Say you saw me here. Saw me start in pursuit of the *Arethusa* to stop her sailing, and to proclaim my brother's innocence." Geoffrey gave the packet into the hands of the groom, and descended the stairs to the door. Vaulting into the saddle, and gathering the reins into his hands, he turned to Williams as he bade him good morning. "Off, now, off, my lad, to Warfdale, and tell them Mr Geoffrey's last words to you were 'My brother Blount is innocent.'"

Down the hill the horse and rider went, and in a few minutes had reached the long green sward.

Williams stood watching the retreating figure of his young master. Across the green, frightening the cackling flock which flapped their wings and hissed, the fleet mare bounded at a hand gallop—past the break-water she flew (that break-water to which a few hours previously she had carried the other brother, flying from the hands of

the executioner), and on to the shore she went, tearing along, and flinging clots of sand into the air with her heels.

“Brown Bess has had her work to do this day,” said Williams. “She’ll deserve her livery by the time she gets to Peele! Well, to be sure, if this ain’t a rum start. Master Blount on Brown Bess a cutting away from Jack Ketch in th’ night. Master Geoffrey on Brown Bess a cutting after Master Blount in th’ morning! What can be up among ’em all, I wonder?”

Without stopping to puzzle his brains further over the obscure question, Williams mounted, and buttoning up the packet in his breast pocket, led the saddle-horses along the cross-country lanes towards Warfdale.

In the soft, balmy air of that August morning Geoffrey proceeded upon his way over the sands towards Cartmel. The journey across the bed of the Bay can hardly be described to persons unacquainted with the locality; but it may be stated that at the head of Morecombe Bay a strip of peninsulated land runs out sea-ward, comprehended between the broad estuaries of two rivers, the Leven and the Winster, which, rising

among the Yorkshire hills, fall into the Bay at few miles distant. Near the point of this peninsula stands Cartmel and the few remains of its ancient Augustinian Priory, founded in 1188, by William Mareschal, Earl of Pembroke. It was the privilege of this foundation to appoint guides for directing travellers across the dangerous sands. The Monastic church still remains, and from its central tower, the great bell, century after century, boomed out its knell of warning to the rashly adventurous, perilling their lives, without guidance, on the sands. The traveller's route is direct to Cartmel. There, crossing the peninsula, he should make his way over the sands of the Leven towards Conishead Priory, near Ulverstone. Ignorance, or neglect of this proper path, and adventuring at a time when the tide is beginning to rise, instead of following its fall, has cost from year to year numberless lives. Nothing could be more tempting than those treacherous sands at low water. To the eye they seem as smooth and flat as a bowling-green. The profound silence which reigns around them is in itself captivating. Above all, the eye is thoroughly deceived as to distance, and it seems the simplest and safest of

undertakings to ride from shore to shore. Geoffrey never gave the subject of route or safety a thought. The broad, dry, silent expanse was stretched out before him. He knew it was constantly crossed, and into its midst he galloped apace. Altogether avoiding the peninsular land as taking him out of his direct way, he pushed forward into the centre of the Bay. The air refreshed him. The salt breeze braced his nerves. He was alone, with miles of expanse between him and any human being. He could speak his thoughts aloud. The sea gulls took no notice of him. The high-bred mare was too intent upon her work to heed the strange words, the shouts and cries which passed from his lips. Onward they went, and breasted the Cartmel point. In the deep silence he fancied he heard bells ringing, peal upon peal they rang, so musical and clear, that he almost stopped to satisfy himself it was not a delusion. He smiled at himself, and attributed to an excited imagination the solemn notes which ever and again fell upon his ears. Still they pursued him! They coursed upon the air, so like those Sabbath evening bells which he had listened to at Launcester again and again in

childhood. They brought back his childhood to him. His gentle mother rose up before his eyes. The last scene in her life was re-enacted. There were Sir Nigel, and Dr Clifford, and Miss Lawson, bending over his mother; and there, too, was Blount, his brother, against whose life, like another Cain, he had lifted his hands. Sight and sound seemed to overpower him. The air was full of the ringing music; the atmosphere about the sands (with the same fairy-world look which the desert presents) seemed like silvery sheets of water, and upon their bosoms floated the forms, the familiar forms of the days gone by. He felt haunted, and urging Brown Bess forward, thought to dash through the haze. It retreated as fast as he charged it. Splash, splash, went the horse's feet, scattering the wet sand about his legs. Then there was water! It was a narrow indentation in the sand-banks, and Bess bounded over it. Across an arched ridge she went. All was dry as a gravel walk. The ridge declined. Again, splash and splash went the mare's feet across more water. Ah! doubtless from that little basin the tide was unable to escape. It was a pool, lodged there, and over it the gallant

mare sprang, merrily flinging the wash about. Now he was on higher ground ; all was dry and hard again. The air was clear ; no longer the delusive picture floated upon it. He could see miles away, nothing, nothing but sands ! Over yonder before him rose the hills. The houses about Ulverstone dotted their slopes. He could see the curling smoke from cottage chimneys rising up towards the mountain-heads. A few miles more and he would have reached the woods at Conishead. But again the sands dipped ; again the water came in sight. Broader than before was the sluggish element. It might be the estuary of the Leven ! so he charged at it, and was up to his saddle-girths in an instant. A few steps more, he was wet to his knees. Bess lost her footing, and began to tread the water. Geoffrey patted her neck, and urged her forward. Heavily did the mare plunge, and then her rider first observed that he was borne along upon a stream. Smoothly and almost imperceptibly the current was running, but the weeds upon its surface showed him there was a current, and that it was no stream from the hills, but the rising of the tide, flowing inland from the sea. But the brave, good Bess,

though spent and weary, made her way over, and once again stood upon the sands. She shook herself vigorously, lifted her nose into the air, and gave a long, piercing neigh. Geoffrey felt the first touch of fear. The mare's instinct awoke his suspicion that there might be danger. Forward he hastened to the crest of the bank, and then perceived he was insulated. The water surrounded him on every side. Before him was the channel of the Leven. So broad was the surface of the water, expanding across the Bay towards Ulverstone, that he felt it would be foolhardiness attempting to swim it. The mare, already over-riden, would never be able to breast it. He paused one moment, wistfully looking at the farther shore he so desperately desired to reach, and hesitating whether he should adventure. But prudence warned him to retreat, and make his way instantly towards Cartmel. Down the smooth bank he rode, and into the channel so lately crossed, the horse and rider dashed once more. It was now evident the tide was flowing. Rapidly it swept upon its way, at every second narrowing the circumference of the island behind him. Bess plunged more and more

heavily, and at last, stretching out her nose upon the tide, she swam with the current. Vainly did Geoffrey urge her against it, and strive to push her across the stream. She was unequal to the task. Once more he turned and landed her. Around him, on every side, the ripple was stealing upon the sand, swallowing it up, and encroaching upon his narrow domain. His presence of mind deserted him. In terror, he rode wildly round and round the water's edge, hesitating where to charge the treacherous tide—where to mark the road for escape. It mattered little! The flood was about him; and a desperate effort must be made. He struck his heels sharply into Bess's flanks. The mare resisted all his urging or persuasion. Wilfully springing from the water, and neighing piteously, she plunged backward towards the sand. Still the waters rose. The island became more and more engulfed; and the steed, planting her fore-feet resolutely upon the ground, stubbornly refused to move.

Geoffrey was at last alive to the awfulness of his position. "O God, forgive me! save me, save me," he cried, as the waters gathered about him. They murmured in his ears. The hollow roll of

the sea broke upon him ; and the lifting current at last covered the sole remaining patch of dry footing for the horse. Then did Bess rear and shudder. She seemed as conscious as her rider of the perilous position ; and the poor brute sent forth a scream of terror, that sounded to Geoffrey like the forewarning of his doom. “ Save me ! save me ! pardon and save me,” shrieked the wretched man, while the waters rose about him. The bells sounded in his ears. He heard them again ; but no longer with musical peal. An iron tongue clanged, and like a discordant voice seemed to summon him away. It was no delusion. The old alarm bell of Cartmel was swinging to and fro in its belfry tower, calling the villagers together, as often it had done of yore. From the grass banks of the beach a chorus of voices floated over the sea, and men and women waved their hands in air beckoning him to make for land. Too late—too late ! The fatal stream had locked him in a firm embrace. It pressed upon him, it hugged him, it overwhelmed him. Before his eyes rockets of fire seemed to spring up to heaven : confused noises dimmed his ears : round and round the waters whirled him :

the frantic mare bounded, and snorted, and sank. Having rid herself of her charge, she rose again, with wild eye and dilated nostril, and with a fierce bound struck out into the current. His last earthly companion deserted him! Geoffrey wrestled with the fell stream. Between him and heaven, darkness seemed to swoop down; and amidst its gloom the forms of the dead were present. The murdered man was there. His mother was there. The boom of the bell and the screams of the affrighted howled in his ears.

"And this is death, this is death," he murmured between his lips, as he vainly strove to swim against the current. Down into the deep he sank, and rose again, crying piteously for mercy, for pardon, for salvation. Down, down again the water dragged him; and yet once more he rose to the surface. "Forgive me, save me! let not the waters come in upon my soul. Oh, Father, mercy!" he gasped, as the last energy of nature failed.

"And with that word his speeché fail began;
For from his feet up to his breast was come
The cold of death, that had him over nome.
And yet moreover in his armés two
The vital strength is lost, and all ago.

Only the intellect withouten more
That dwelled in his herté sike and sore,
Gan faillen when the herté felté death ;
Dusked his eyën two, and failed his breath :
But on his lady yet cast he his eye ;
His laste word was—‘ Mercy.’ ” *

With clasped hands uplifted to heaven, with a hollow groan upon his lips,—but with eyes steadfastly fixed on the bright blue sky, from which the eye of God looked down, and the ear of mercy heard the imploring cry to Him who is able to save, he fell back upon the death-bed of the pitiless element, his young head pillowed upon its waves, and the great deep his shroud,—drowned—drowned—drowned !

* Chaucer, “Death of Arcita.”





CHAPTER IX.

TOGETHER.

"Without thy presence earth gives no refection ;
Without thy presence sea affords no treasure ;
Without thy presence air's a rank infection ;
Without thy presence heaven itself no pleasure :
If not possess'd, if not enjoy'd in thee,
What's earth, or sea, or air, or heaven to me ?"



HE lithesome Arethusa bounded like a sylph over the sea ! Jack Laddler was in his element. Like all jolly tars, Jack was a great admirer of the ladies. For the first time in his life, jovial Jack found himself the protector and guardian of the lives, welfare, and comfort of two ladies. Mabel and Miss Lawson were on board the Arethusa. There was a goodly company ; Sir Nigel, Dr Clifford, and Blount. Three gentlemen and two ladies. It was as much as the Arethusa could do to stow the party away. But the resources on ship-board being proverbial, Jack was not to be disconcerted. He rigged up a corner for each passenger. Every

one was disposed to be well pleased ; and the little party speedily put themselves to rights.

No pen could describe the affecting scene on the deck of the bonny yacht when the cutter hove-to alongside, bearing Blount and Mabel and Mr Trigg. It was early morning. The mists of night had begun to

“fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.”

The poor old man, Sir Nigel, broken down, careworn, and tortured with suspense, received Blount with outstretched arms, but speechless tongue. Like a patriarch, the Baronet wept over him—the child, his child, which was lost and found. Respectfully the other members of the small circle stood apart, shrinking from intruding upon a meeting so deeply agitating. At last the old man began to recover himself, and return to consciousness. He looked around him at the group, amidst which stood Mabel. Mabel! Had she not returned him good for evil? It was he who had disapproved Blount’s attachment to the girl! He who had depreciated her! He who had brought down misery upon their heads, and through them upon his own.

Sir Nigel had long since seen his error, and repented it. But he had not seen Miss Massey. She stood before him now, the saviour of his nephew's life, the preserver of his ancient line. The Baronet had no false pride. He would not have preferred owing his obligation to some one else. Calamity had proved her love. She had acted like a heroine; and the chivalric spirit of the old man was astir with admiration and gratitude. He advanced towards Mabel, and, drawing her to him, said, "Thank you, Miss Massey, from the bottom of my heart. I thank you for your courageous conduct, and for saving my nephew's life. I pray you to forgive me for the unhappiness which my pride caused you. Let the future obliterate the past. An old man's blessing will do you no harm, my brave child" (he laid his hand on her head, and kissed her brow). "May God bless you *both*," continued Sir Nigel, "and as you have been my boy's protector, let us see whether he and his old uncle cannot protect you for the future."

Every face beamed with delight. The tears swam in Mabel's eyes. Verily she had her reward. To be recognized and honoured by Sir

Nigel, to be received in his arms, and called his "brave child," to have her name coupled with Blount's, and the old man's blessing conferred on them jointly,—this was the fulfilment of her heart's desire; it was payment and satisfaction for all she had endured and risked. "My own Blount," whispered she, smiling through her tears, "my own; are you not mine?"

Let the hoisting sails shut out the lovers from our gaze. There was no time for delay. In a few minutes the *Arethusa's* anchor swang at her bow, and Mr Trigg began to take his leave. He, Miss Lawson, and Dr Clifford passed a few moments in whispered conversation. Mr Trigg was making his final arrangements, and agreeing upon the line of action he should pursue. The yacht was to make for the Mediterranean. All communications were to be forwarded to Genoa. Should any urgency arise, Mr Trigg would repair to Genoa, where he would be certain to learn Sir Nigel's whereabouts from Jack Laddler. The *Arethusa* would lie in harbour, while the party made excursions in Italy. A constant communication would be kept up with the vessel. High hopes and good wishes were in every heart, on

every lip. Trigg would pursue his investigations undisturbedly, now that Blount was safe. Whatever occurred from time to time should be made known as occasion might require. Then the faithful, devoted lawyer bid his friends faréwell. Poor Trigg! He fancied his face as hard and dry as parchment. Somehow it was relaxed and moist when the moment for parting came! Standing upon the ruins of Peele, he waved his last adieu to the little group: and the Arethusa stood out to sea, bearing away from English shores the liberated captive, full of hope, and joy, and happiness, at the same moment that, in the same Bay, his guilty brother was sinking, helpless, friendless, alone, beneath its waves.

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They were together, Mabel and Blount! They could enjoy to their utmost satisfaction an unrestrained intercourse. Miss Lawson was constantly engaged with papers, plans, and protracted consultations with Dr Clifford. The services of the ecclesiastic had been solicited, and readily given, to aid his old friend in her researches when they reached Italy. The voyage was never tedious to them in maturing the series of operations

to be carried out, as soon as the yacht touched Italian soil.

Sir Nigel, happy in the happiness of those around him, the dearest to him on earth, revived rapidly under the influence of fresh sea-breezes and the mental repose he enjoyed. He gave himself up to his favourite pursuit, and became a sailor among his crew. The navigation of the yacht was his occupation. So Blount and Mabel were left for hours together in undisturbed possession of the deck, enjoying the sunny days and the endless variety which the sea afforded; at night, leaning over the vessel's side watching the phosphorescent lines of light (like comets darting through water) which the fish created, following the ship's track, and playing about its sides. Starlight and moonlight watched over the course of the *Arethusa*, and shone with gentle rays on the forms of the lovers.

They whispered words of devotion together; and made their present joy more gladsome, in recounting the terrors of the past, the trials they had endured, the dangers they had escaped.

At length the yacht sighted the rock and lofty tower of the Fanale. Scudding before the

warm breezes of the Libeccio she gracefully rounded the Molo Nuovo ; passed into the Porto ; and cast anchor under the protecting shadow of the Molo Vecchio of Genoa.

“ *Genova la Superba !* ” Surely that city of historical renown never deserved its title better than as they first beheld it, bathed in the rich sunlight, framed in an everlasting glory of sea and sky. The whiteness of the buildings resplendently contrasted with the intense blueness of the horizon against which they rested ; and the bright verandahs came out picturesquely, with here and there a strip of coverlet suspended from them, the colour of which seemed selected for artistic effect.

The city of the Genoese looked its gayest, almost too gay for the capital of an ancient republic, the home of the famous cross-bowmen, amongst whom, the cloth-yard shafts of the gallant archers of heroic Edward made havoc at Agincourt ; the stronghold of so many fearless adventurers in the Middle Ages, who left durable memorials of their conquests in the East ; the metropolis of those merchant princes who created an aristocracy, which the *Libro d'Oro* of no other nation could rival in magnificence.

There is little in the Genoa of the present to recall its past renown. Its velvet maintains the Italian pre-eminence acquired when everything costly, of the finest fabric and of the most approved shape, came from Milan, Mantua, Venice, or some other famed city of dis-united Italy.

The Genoese of to-day, if not *condottiori*, are better employed ; they may not be so picturesquely clad as in the old times when they made their way in the world as free lances ; nevertheless, those who throng their busy streets, vending melons, ices, cakes, macaroni, have their brown skins as well set off by their scanty garments as the industrious class of any community under the sun.

See their masses of dark curly hair, their brilliant eyes, their olive complexions, their merry faces, and [their animated gesticulations as they shout, laugh, sing, lounge, dance, and gossip, at every corner and by every door-way, and you will readily acknowledge, that even in their rags they are pictorial studies.

There is another aspect of the city worthy of observation. Look at the forest of masts, and the various crafts sailing in and out of that splendid Porto ; observe the contrast and affluence

of colour, in sky, sea, shipping at anchor, laden boats, and shore craft, passing backwards and forwards with merchandise, with fruit, with produce, with busy traffickers, with jovial idlers ; all lending grace to the glowing beauty of the picture.

Glance upon the shore, see there the groups of merchants, sailors, soldiers, porters, vendors, travellers, of various nations, [talking, eating, drinking, smoking, hurrying to or from the landing-places of Pte. Spinola, Reale, Mercanzia, or watching the busy scene from the Strada Carlo Alberto, or the Molo Vecchio.

To the English party Genoa proved a great attraction. The sturdy Ligurian with his strong nationality of feature ; the charming pezzotto of the ladies, falling around their arms and shoulders, and setting off their dark hair and beautiful features with wonderful effect ; the gaudy mezzaro of the labourers' wives making the streets gay with variegated colours ; the gangs of galley-slaves with their red caps, and clothes ; the trains of mules in brilliant trappings, were objects of curiosity and delight to Mabel. She took possession of Sir Nigel, and insisted upon his seeing

everything and going everywhere. Along the Strada Carlo Alberto, from Porto Franco to the arsenal, Darsena, she scampered, dragging the old gentleman after her; and in high dudgeon she resented the unmannerly repulse which the Facchini gave her when she wished to enter and survey Porto Franco itself. Dr Clifford proved invaluable. He alone was familiar with Italy. He could speak the language; and being a priest, enjoying literary fame in his Church, he was able to ensure for his friends an inspection of the treasures which the sacristans might have to exhibit in any of the Cathedrals they visited. Around the harbour, beyond the Darsena, and through the Piazza di Aqua Verde, the Doctor led his friends to the Palazzo Doria. That magnificent structure appeared like a fairy-scene to Mabel. She had spied the stately halls and lovely gardens, fresh and green and inviting, with their orange and cypress walks, as the Arethusa bounded within the Mole, with full canvas set to the Libeccio breeze. But her imagination had not conceived anything so superb as the prince of princely palaces in Genova la Superba! Dr Clifford's historical and antiquary lore gave to

the halls and galleries a heightened history. As they passed from saloon to saloon, he sketched the life of Il Principe, Andria Doria, whom Charles V. delighted to honour. He told how his galleys had helped to expel the French, and liberate the city; how Tasso celebrated him in his verse! Along the great gallery and into the garden they passed, where the glorious panorama burst upon their view. Descending to the shore they saw the alleys and walks, the cypress groves, and endless varieties of flowers, backed by the broad Porto with its forest of masts and gay pennants; encircling it, the stately Strada Carlo Alberto; beyond, the splendid Strada Nuova; and climbing the hill, the successive circuits of the city, interlined with the narrow *vicoli*!

The Palazzi having been successively visited, churches next engaged attention. Despite the orders of Innocent VIII. for the exclusion of females, Mabel succeeded in examining to her satisfaction the Chapel of St John in the Duomo; through the Doctor's influence, the precious relic, the Sacro Catino, was shown her, and the sacristan narrated the tradition that the emerald dish held in the hands of Joseph of Arimathea had caught

the Sang Real, as it flowed from the side of our Blessed Lord !

From the strange medley of styles in the Duomo, they proceeded to examine that monument of ecclesiastical munificence which the Pallavicini family raised. Its costly marbles and numberless pictures, its gilded vaultings and brilliant-coloured walls, astonished every member of the party.

“ I did not catch the name of this church,” said Miss Lawson. “ I suppose Guido painted that Assumption purposely for the Altar. It is a masterpiece.”

“ It is so,” said the Doctor. “ They call this Sant’ Ambrogio.”

A thrill ran through Miss Lawson’s veins as she heard the name. It had no association for her ; but the marginal note in the Book of Hours instantly recurred to her memory. She wondered at herself for feeling curious ; and yet she could not restrain her curiosity.

“ I suppose this is a parish church ? ” asked Miss Lawson.

“ Si, Signora,” replied the sacristan.

“ Of course, Doctor, your priests keep careful registers ? ”

“As careful,” replied the Doctor with a smile, “as you Protestant heretics could keep.”

“Do you allow people to pay their shilling—I beg your pardon—I mean their Zwanziger or Lira, or whatever may be the proper name for it, to search the registers?”

“We search the registers when we have a reason for doing so. But why on earth do you ask such an out-of-the-way question here?”

“I do not know that,” Miss Lawson rejoined. “Suppose it is entirely in the way; what would you say then?”

“You must explain.”

“If I do, it will be to put you to the blush, Doctor! Who lost Sir Nigel’s Book of Hours. Eh? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Who dropped it in Lonsdale Priory; and who found it there?”

Sir Nigel and Blount highly enjoyed Dr Clifford’s discomfiture. He *did* look thoroughly ashamed.

“I should think, Sir Nigel,” continued Miss Lawson, “now you have got the book safely back into your possession again, you will be rather more particular for the future to whom you lend it.”

“I shall lend it to no one,” said the Baronet. “Its history is already a romance! I shall never part with it again.”

“When Mr Trigg returned it you, I suppose you put it away securely.”

“I put it up securely; but I did not put it away, because I have it with me.”

“With you? Here? Do you mean it is here, in Genoa?”

“In my despatch-box, Madam, and I hope it is safe there.”

“This is, indeed, a piece of good luck!”

“What is?” said every one, extremely puzzled by Miss Lawson’s conversation.

“When we get back to the Hotel I will inform you.”

The day’s sight-seeing being concluded, and dinner ended, Miss Lawson resumed the subject, and asked the Baronet, “Pray, Sir Nigel, have you ever had your attention directed to an entry upon one of the pages in your Book of Hours?”

“Never,” said Sir Nigel; “I am not aware that any such entry exists.”

“Will you gratify me by producing the book,

and letting us all examine it? Mabel knows there is such an entry, for she has seen it."

Sir Nigel readily consented. The book was taken out of the despatch-box. Miss Lawson turned to the service of the Benediction, and pointed to the words, "Sant' Ambrogio."

The Baronet and the Doctor carefully scanned the writing. The former gathered nothing from it. The latter examined the orthography with the closest and most curious inspection. "I am not a betting man," observed the Doctor, "neither am I an expert, nevertheless I should be prepared to back my opinion regarding that hand-writing."

"Whose do you take it for, Doctor?" inquired Miss Lawson.

"I must be immensely deceived if it is not the late Gerald Massey's."

"You knew him intimately," observed Sir Nigel; "you ought to be a judge of the character of his hand."

"But even then," interposed the Doctor, "I have no idea what Miss Lawson's object is."

"It is easily explained," said that lady. "I have been told, as you have, Gerald Massey was a married man, and left a child, sole heiress to his

estate, in the person of this Clara Harcourt. I have a deeper and better reason than the indulgence of idle curiosity, for desiring to know whether Gerald ever was married; if so, to whom? No matter about my reasons; they are a woman's. When the Book of Hours was recovered from the bed of the Laune, Mr Trigg noticed and pointed out this marginal entry. The name of the church we visited to-day brought it back to memory. If the note should happen to refer to a marriage ceremony in a church of Saint Ambrosio, why may it not have occurred here, in that very church?"

"Very true, very true, indeed," said Sir Nigel; "the inquiry is well worth making."

"And shall be made immediately," added the Doctor.

"If he married, and this Clara Harcourt can be shown to be Gerald's child," continued Miss Lawson, "we must bend our heads to stubborn facts, and see our child here (who belongs to all of us, I think) despoiled."

Sir Nigel drew "his child" (as he now called Mabel) to his side. "My little Gazelle will never want a home," he said, "and that's a comfort. Don't fret, darling. There's enough for you and

Blount and all of us, thank God ! at Warfdale, if you should lose Durham-Massey. But before you do, we'll make the singing witch prove her title clearly."

"Don't be hard on her, poor girl," exclaimed Mabel; "I know Clara well. Her ambition is awakened; and she longs to rid herself of those parasites, the Montgomerys. She believes Durham to be hers. If so, she is right in seeking possession."

"And if not so?" asked Sir Nigel.

"She cannot prove a falsehood," replied Mabel.

"No, my dear," said the Baronet, "she cannot, but others may try to do it for her."

* * * *

"There are who darkling and alone
Would wish the weary night were gone;
Though dawning morn should only show
The secret of their unknown woe;
Who pray for sharpest throbs of pain
To ease them of doubt's galling chain;
'Only disperse the cloud,' they cry,
'And if our fate be death, give light and let us die.'"

The song of the Christian Year describes, in fitting words, the state of Miss Lawson's mind during the restless and sleepless night which

intervened before the hour of her satisfaction could come. It came at length, and found her impatiently waiting for the Doctor. Sir Nigel was left undisturbed. The rest of the party repaired to the church, and found the priests and choir alternately chanting their *Matin Hymn*. In the cool morning air, the quiet of the early day, the responses of the hymn sounded musically afar, like a jubilant chant of welcome to those who pressed into the house of God. They all knelt and listened reverently until the service was ended. Then repairing to the sacristy, Dr Clifford explained the object of their mission. The Padre being satisfied, and the desired authority given, the register of the church was referred to. With painful anxiety, every entry in the year 1832 was curiously scanned. Name after name was read, until, at last, the eye of Mabel, running over the columns in advance, detected the object of their search. "There it is! there it is!" she exclaimed, pointing with her finger to the bottom of a page, on which was inscribed the record of a marriage.

June 20, 1832. "Gerald Massey, of Durham-Massey, an Englishman, to Bertha Lawson, daughter of Lord Grassdale, an English noble, deceased."
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Miss Lawson stood transfixed, gazing at the book. None who watched her, except Mabel, knew the tempest of conflicting feelings which agitated her. Anguish and joy, sorrow and delight, were moving her heart of hearts. It was joy more than words could tell, to see her sister's memory rescued from the stigma of reproach. She rejoiced in that. But for herself and the girl at her side, the discovery was a source of wretchedness.

The blight at her own heart was complete. She had sought and found the best and worst proof that Gerald never loved her. Her own sister had been her rival. Bitterly did this evidence sting and gall the proud spirit within her. Doubly bitter was the poisonous bite of the hard fact before her, when she reflected that Mabel's position would be lost, and a stranger could claim, by the ties of blood, the love and devotion she had bestowed upon another.

The records of the Municipality confirmed the discovery at the church. The Civil Marriage Contract, being much fuller in detail than the Ecclesiastical Register, supplied the most accurate information that could be needed. It was a

matter of surprise and considerable comment that the names of the witnesses were unknown to Miss Lawson. As her sister departed from Heidelberg under the protection of Dupont, Miss Lawson naturally expected his signature would be attached to the marriage record. Subsequently there was occasion to recall this circumstance, and appreciate its importance in explaining the plans of Carbono and Creevy.

When Genoa had been thoroughly lionized, it was resolved to visit Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. The yacht might take them to Leghorn, and returning to Genoa, await orders from Sir Nigel. Miss Lawson would have been better satisfied, for her own purposes, to have sojourned a little longer in the City of the Sea: but the anxiety which the Baronet exhibited to reach Florence, silenced her wishes. She cheerfully complied with his desires, and, without further delay, the *Arethusa* conveyed them to Leghorn. Thence they made their way to Florence. The fifty miles of journey which the vettura had to perform from Pisa to the city, was one of strange excitement to Sir Nigel. With childlike impatience he watched every turn of the road, as if he never would catch sight of the

anxiously-looked-for domes and towers. Empoli was passed. Dr Clifford told the story of the Guelphs and Ghibelines, and of the intent of the Ghibeline Parliament to raze Florence to the dust. He interested every ear, save Sir Nigel's. The Baronet had neither eyes nor ears for any subject, save one. Past Monte Lupo they drove, and under the cliffs on which the fortress of Capraja stands. Entering the gorge through which the Arno flows, the pent-up feelings of the Baronet underwent as great a struggle as did the waters of the river in that deep defile. He knew when the pine-clad heights should divide, and the ravines open into the plain, Florence would burst upon his view! Winding and turning along the narrow way, the vetturino urged his cavalli di posta. At length the pass began to widen, and the vehicle jolted through the streets of Signa, where the busy workwomen, seated about their homes, were plaiting straw, pursuing their village trade.

The Val d'Arno opened upon their view. Brozzi was gained, smiling in the autumnal loveliness of the valley. Villas and mansions gave indication of approach to the city, and under

the shadow of the purple hills, at length the dome of the Duomo, the towering head of the Campanile, and the machicolated battlements of Palazzo Vecchio rose in grey outline against the sky.

“Firenza la Bella,” exclaimed the Doctor, pointing to the distant churches, the heights of Fiesole, and the frowning walls of Fortress Belvedere.

Sir Nigel stood up on his seat, to scan the picture growing into view. Big tears rolled down the old man’s cheeks, for he realized, at last, that he was approaching the home and the grave of the brother he had tenderly loved.





CHAPTER X.

COMFORT IN SUFFERING.



WHEN Mr Trigg had watched the Arctusa, until she was like a speck upon the Channel, he returned towards Durham-Massey to rejoin Whiffler, and resume his investigations. His road lay through Cartmel. On reaching that place he found the village in the utmost commotion. The tidings of the catastrophe which had occurred were spread far and wide. Curiosity as well as horror was excited: for when Brown Bess had disengaged herself from her rider, she had swum with the current, and eventually reached the beach in safety. The mare was tenderly welcomed by the fishing-folk, and also quickly recognized. Many people knew her as a favourite saddle-mare of Sir Nigel's. This fact had raised

the consternation of the people to a pitch of painful excitement. Who could the person be that had rashly attempted to cross the sands? Mr Trigg arrived at the village to find it in the height of ferment. He knew more than he chose to tell of Sir Nigel's proceedings; but he was unable to allay the excitement of the people. Sir Nigel and Blount were safe. Could it be that the groom had, for some reason or another, endeavoured to catch the *Arethusa* before she sailed? The mare had been ridden by Blount to Hest-Bank. She had remained there in charge of the groom. He alone knew Sir Nigel's movements. Mr Trigg came to the conclusion it must be the groom; and out of respect for Sir Nigel he felt it his duty to remain at Cartmel, until the tide turned, and the fishermen, who were already gone out in search of the body, should recover it, or report it was carried out to sea. No great delay ensued. As soon as the waters began to sink, the corpse was espied, flung upon the shore. The waves were giving it a farewell kiss, and retiring with a hollow moan to their ocean bed.

In trepidation and in haste, the villagers ran towards the spot where the corpse was stretched,

as soon as the signal of its discovery was given. Mr Trigg was there among the first.

Amazement and horror seized him, as he looked down upon the face of Geoffrey Tempest! He could hardly credit the evidences of his own sight! "It is Geoffrey Tempest!" proclaimed Mr Trigg. The people caught up the name, passing it from mouth to mouth. Their minds were filled with dismay.

Though the youth himself was unknown to them, his uncle's name was a household word throughout the neighbourhood. Sorrow was depicted upon every countenance. "Death's busy again at Warfdale," said an aged man: "but he's not among th' aged folk the likes of me! He's a cutting and a mowing o' th' young."

"As he did afore," said a weather-beaten, hardy fellow, bending down over the body, and calling upon his fellows to help lift. "This be th' second job o' this sort as I've had to do for Warfdale." The speaker was Robert, the valiant knight of the May-Day sports at the Tower, who had been the companion of Blount and Dr Clifford, when young Willoughby Massey was found drowned in the basin of the Warfe.

“Ben’t it strange,” continued Robert, “how th’ children of Warfdale and Durham gang to heaven by waiter ! ”

“It runs i’ th’ families,” said the old man. “Dust ’ou mind how Maister Gerald was drowned likewise under Launcester Ackiduct ? ”

“Look ye ’ere,” interposed the Cartmel clerk (a man in great parochial esteem, “who know’d his Bible and could talk tall”), “it’s the ways of Providence, which air inskerrutible, and which says to all on us,—Thee get on wi’ thee deeing.”

Mr Trigg was buried in his own thoughts while this conversation occurred. Astonishment had so completely possessed him on first recognizing the corpse of Geoffrey, that he was unfitted for reflection. When he began to recover himself, and to review the circumstances which had occurred, he was puzzled beyond measure.

Geoffrey Tempest, as he believed, was in London. The Baronet had carefully avoided his coming down to Warfdale, fearing he might discover and interfere with Mr Trigg’s plans for Blount’s escape. Here, however, was Geoffrey upon the scene of action. He must have been at Hest-Bank, to get possession of Brown Bess. His

attempt to cross the sands, looked as if he were endeavouring to pursue Blount. Strangest of all was his attire. Mr Trigg examined the clothes upon the body with the most bewildered feelings. The men proceeded to raise it upon their shoulders for removal. In doing this, the cadger's cap, which was attached by a piece of elastic to a button-hole of the jacket, dangled in the air. Mr Trigg bent forward and took it in his hands, in order to carry it. In breaking the elastic for this purpose, he was struck by the label upon the lining. He read the same motto which he had observed in the cap at Creevy's house. But the lettering in this instance was undamaged. It revealed the direction, "Angus, Whitechapel." Unobserved, Mr Trigg thrust the cap into his pocket, and held his tongue. A suspicion had crossed his mind. It was a foul suspicion, he allowed; but he had studied the character of Geoffrey closely. He knew he was in the habit of visiting the Creevys. Worst of all, he knew his jealousy of his brother. "Gracious Heavens!" muttered Trigg to himself, "can it be possible he desired his brother's death?" Heartily and honestly did the lawyer internally ejaculate his

thanksgivings that Sir Nigel had been carried away from witnessing the scene of which he stood a spectator.

Neither inquest nor private inquiries threw a single ray of light upon the strange death of young Geoffrey. Never, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, had Launcester reeled under such popular excitement, as intoxicated the gossips for days after the double astonishment, created by Blount's escape, and Geoffrey's death.

Sir Nigel was the object of universal commiseration; for desolation seemed to be overtaking the old line of Tempest. Mr Trigg and the domestics followed the body of Geoffrey to the grave. There were none of his own kith or kin to mourn him. Friendless and alone he had died—in loneliness was he buried. But though no tearful eye had looked into his grave, he did not perish unregretted. There was one woman's breast which felt for him, loved him, and sorrowed for him. It held the heart of Clara Harcourt. The only tenderness she had ever experienced, had been expressed by him for her. In the hour of her greatest misery Geoffrey had sought her. He had flattered her,

praised her, and pleased her. A sardonic moralist, and a woman too, has said, "The greatest earthly happiness is to be thoroughly deceived." Othello held a kindred sentiment. Clara was thoroughly deceived; but she lived in happy ignorance. Geoffrey had indeed admired and toyed with her. Repulsed by another, he had in the rebound of mortified pride, flung his "affections" at her. He had awakened her ambition, built up her expectation of fortune and position. He had attached her to him. Poor, solitary girl! she needed some one to love. Surrounded by adulation, and for ever being incensed with fulsome compliment, the altar remained without an offering; the world's service was all ceremony. She believed in Geoffrey. She loved him according to her nature, with a strange, capricious love; and in her vain fondness she believed he loved her. Her greatest earthly happiness, the greatest she ever knew, arose from being thoroughly deceived.

Was hers a solitary role in the play of life? It was but a week before, she had seen Geoffrey. He had come down to the river-side cottage at Hampton to see her. Lazily dropping down the

stream, the punt carried along wherever the wilful water liked to bear it, had she not listened to Geoffrey's agitated words, as he anticipated his brother's death? Had she not been awe-struck by the vehemence of his language and the torture of mind he displayed as he spoke of Blount's impending fate? With what wild and whirling words had he proclaimed himself unworthy of her and of her love. Of her! the poor singing girl without a penny in the world, unless his clever brain and Creevy's perseverance should win it for her in a court of law.

He was the prop of her hopes, the stay of her life. And he was gone. He had left her—alone.

Solitary Clara! more solitary than she guessed, and thoroughly deceived, she lived on, treasuring a worthless memory at her heart and carrying a lie in her right hand.

* * * *

The intelligence from Launcester produced a profound sensation in the Digby Shirley mansion. It arrived when Mrs Digby and her daughters were enjoying a five o'clock "drum!" The beverage which enlivens while it does not inebriate, which binds the female world together in

communion and confidence, was being handed about to several of Mrs Shirley's particular friends. The flow of soul and flow of bowl were, as is usual, sympathetic ! A Hansom dashed up to the door, and Mr Shirley precipitated himself from it ; not waiting for the vehicle to come to a stand, so violent was his haste, that gentleman lost his balance, sprawled on the pavement, and cut his trousers across the knees, and severely bruised his hands. In this sorry condition he presented himself to his family and friends.

“La ! Pa !” exclaimed Maria, “what *has* happened ? What *has* brought you home from office at this time of day ?” Mrs Shirley's artificial teeth chattered, and her Elizabethan lace was desperately ruffled.

“Such intelligence, such marvellous and painful intelligence,” gasped Mr Shirley, rubbing his knees and his hands. “Blount Tempest has broken from prison and escaped !”

“Escaped !” echoed the chorus of females in shrill unison.

“Escaped,” continued Shirley, confirmatively, “but more than that. Prepare yourselves, my

beloved wife and darlings, for a shock, a dreadful shock. Geoffrey Tempest is drowned !”

This was too much for the nerves of such a sensitive family. Mrs Shirley stiffened. She became as blue and rigid as the starch in her cuffs and collar. Maria, having perpetrated a heart-rending screech, followed her leader, and measured her elongated form upon the sofa. Georgey alone preserved her presence of mind, and assiduously plied the noses of her relatives with salts.

The affectation of sorrow permeated the Shirley establishment for several days. It diffused itself like an odour throughout the house, ascending to the *femme de chambre* in the attics, and penetrating to the bosom of the scullery-maid, who washed the dishes with her tears.

Happily, as in the case of all spasmodic woe, elasticity of feeling speedily produced a family revival. Save and except a contemplation of the ceilings whenever Geoffrey's name was alluded to, (as if his spirit were expected to be detected hovering about the white-wash,) the Shirleys returned to the world again by rapid progresses. A little change was thought necessary for Maria, who sought consolation for her shattered nerves in the

society of her dear friend Belinda, among the shaded paths of Hampton Court. Band-days acted as cordials and specifics! Her doting mother was apprehensive she was threatened with angina pectoris. The doctor re-assured the Shirley family upon the subject, after having carefully "sounded" his patient.

The scientific invention of Laennec failed to detect any disease; but the stethoscope which the worthy physician used, happened not to be sufficiently searching. A subaltern of Marines, who frequented the Palace Gardens, and was addicted to feeding the gold and silver fish in the fountain, with a deeper power of penetration than the man of pills and draughts, discovered that Maria was suffering under an affection of the heart; and as a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind, he took an opportunity of explaining to her that he also was subjected to a similar complaint. Maria and the subaltern, having studied the disorder together, came to the conclusion there was only one sure remedy. With the palpitating approval of Mrs Shirley, and the blubbing benediction of that man of feeling, her darling father, Maria was led by, or rather (for accuracy is a great virtue)

it should be said—led her subaltern to the altar of St George's, Hanover Square, where, with all the dash and splash and ostentation which could gratify the vulgar fancy of aspiring upstarts, the military victim was fettered in the bonds of matrimony. Digby Shirley (as he expressed it) “embraced the opportunity.” He did; for having embraced everybody, and whispered sleek, hurried words into all the bridesmaids' ears, he delivered himself of a speech at the wedding-breakfast, which opening with a pious glance at Cana of Galilee, rapidly travelled homeward to Wilton Place, and gave a sketch of Shirley-life, of the domestic peace and happiness he had enjoyed in his own marital career, of the “help-meet Mrs S. had been to him,” of the manner in which she had “built him up.” Finally, he wound-up with a peroration, which requested all good angels to hover over Maria's Honiton-lace scarf and orange-blossoms; which filled the gushing eyes of the female auditory with scalding tears; which tortured the gentlemen into a searching examination of the manufacture of the Shirley plates and spoons; and which “nearly sent mamma off” (Georgey subsequently declared). Shirley concluded his oration, in a

deeply solemn tone ; and, apparently addressing a prisoner at the bar whom he was despatching to execution, he bid his son—(for so he might call him then)—Go ! (with a flutter of voice)—Go and do—(with a sob)—“ Go, and do thou likewise ! ” Sinking into his seat, overwhelmed by his feelings, Shirley enveloped his head in his napkin, as if he was rubbing himself dry after a dip in the sea ; and the verger of the church (hired for the event as a waiter) capped the speech by pronouncing “ Amen.”





CHAPTER XI.

“MR TRIGG SEES THINGS MORE CLEARLY.”

“**L**ET the dead bury their dead,” said Mr Trigg to himself on returning from Geoffrey Tempest’s funeral. “Dead men tell no tales! De mortuis nil!—absolutely nil! No ‘bonum’ I fear can be said in this instance, and mine shall not be the hand to reveal any malum, if I discover it! Investigation is inevitable. For the Baronet’s sake, his nephew’s memory shall be treated tenderly and cautiously. But Thelwall Trigg must do his duty.”

The following morning Trigg proceeded to the Priory, and to the wood above its ruins. The place had been carefully guarded, according to direction, and the watchers were on the alert at his approach. Mr Trigg proceeded to examine

the footprints once again. Taking a parcel from his pocket, he produced a boot, and compared it with the indentations on the bank. With horror, but without any great surprise, he found it exactly fitted the impressed footsteps! The lawyer's heart sickened at the suspicious evidence which seemed springing up around him. He was ready to exclaim, "I'll see no more!" But, there was another and smaller footstep! Jacob Price had sworn to seeing two persons retreating from the Priory.

If the footprint was Geoffrey's, it was no longer possible to summons him into court! Whose was the other? Trigg wandered about the grounds revolving the subject in his mind; and abhorring the supposition that Geoffrey Tempest could possibly have been concerned in such a fearful deed.

He could not drown the suspicion which haunted him: and yet it did him violence to entertain it. Whatever the truth might be, time alone would prove. One thing was certain. Whether Geoffrey was or was not implicated in the crime, some second person had aided in it. Mr Trigg was slowly and thoughtfully pacing

towards the hall, with these horrible imaginings torturing his brain, when he met the groom, Williams, returning from Durham-Massey. He had visited the hall several times to glean tidings of Miss Massey.

Strictly preserving the confidence Geoffrey had reposed in him, and not finding either Miss Massey or Miss Lawson, Williams was at a loss how to act or what to do. From the observations Mr Geoffrey had made, he was aware the secret packet must be of importance: but he found himself in that dilemma of servants, when they feel called upon to think. Luckily for him, relief was nearer at hand than he supposed.

Having seen Mr Trigg at the break-water, he was conscious that gentleman must be in Sir Nigel's and Miss Massey's confidence.

"Ax your pardin, Mr Trigg; but did the ladies sail in th' Aresuser?"

"To be sure they did, Williams. Did not you know that?"

"Hard a bit," answered Williams. "I'se sorely puzzled, Maister Trigg."

"Why so?"

“Case, after you’d a sailed, I see’d Maister Geoffrey at Hest-Bank.”

“You! You saw him? Did he speak to you?”

“That did he, so! And sent me with a message to Miss Massey.”

“To Miss Massey,” exclaimed Mr Trigg, with the utmost astonishment. “What could he want with Miss Massey?”

“He’de sum’ut to send her,” Williams replied, “and he trusted it to me. He told me, he did, to give it no’un but Miss Massey or Mistress Lawson. ‘It is mighty partickelar,’ says he; ‘and mind ’e, Williams,’ says he to me, ‘my brother Blount’s innocent!’”

Mr Trigg listened with the deepest interest to this narration. Every syllable added confirmation to his suppositions. Geoffrey’s knowledge of Blount’s innocence finally convinced him.

“So you have something to deliver to Miss Massey, have you? I’m afraid, my lad, it will be a long time before you can do that. Miss Massey is gone abroad, and may not be in England again for many a day. What is it you have got to send?”

“A packet, Maister Trigg, sealed up by young Maister Geoffrey. I was to give ’un to Miss Massey mysen.”

“But you can’t give it yourself, Williams. I will send it for you, if you like to trust it to me.”

Williams cogitated, and discussed, and argued the matter. Having convinced himself that Mr Trigg would forward the letter, and being assured it would reach Miss Massey’s hands in the same condition in which it left his own, Williams produced the missive of Geoffrey and deposited it with Mr Trigg.

“Mind ’e, Maister Trigg. It be a message from the dead, sacred loike; and yo’ll treat it so, wonno you?”

“I promise you, most faithfully, I will do so, Williams; you may trust me. I shall be communicating with Sir Nigel and Miss Massey shortly, and will forward the letter to her.”

“Thank ’e, Maister Trigg. I’s certain sure you’ll do so. It’s welly nigh feeding time for th’ horses, and I’s beawnd for th’ stables. Wish ’e good day, Maister Trigg.”

Williams touched his cap, and passed on towards Warfdale.

Mr Trigg lingered on the road, examining the packet. On turning it over he was astonished to find the postscript which Geoffrey had written on the outside before parting with Williams. His own name too!

Hurriedly running his eye over the writing, it required all his self-possession to restrain the exclamation which rose to his lips as he read—“Under the same roof;” the same roof! whose roof can he mean? Carbono’s? What can he have to do with it? Patience, patience! The scene moves to London, does it? Fly, murderer, fly for your life! The scent grows strong. Another day, and the hounds of the law will be at your heels.”

That night saw Trigg on his road to London; and in the grey chill of six o’clock in the morning the night mail carried him into the station at Euston Square. Whiffler was there to meet him, and to obey commands. That keen-nosed clerk, who could sniff the lay of crime a long way off, put together in his mind the various fragments of the story which Trigg related.

“First of all,” said his master, “we must know under what roof the plot against Miss Mas-

sey was hatched. We may kill two birds with one stone. Observe this expression (pointing to the inscription on the parcel), ‘Plot!’ Then it is a plot. Good, Whiffler, that at least is satisfactory. But, as I’ve said before, one thing at a time. We will deal with the crime first, the conspiracy afterwards. One thing will help us to the other. This Carbono fellow! where does he live? This plot is his, of course.”

“Do you think so?” said Whiffler, looking like Diogenes, and ready to sit for his portrait.

“Don’t you?”

“Not I.”

“Who, then, do you suppose is at the bottom of all this villany?”

“I have not a doubt about the matter. Creevy’s the man, sir; mark my words, Creevy’s the man!”

Whiffler’s assertion recommended itself to Mr Trigg’s mind. The label in the cap gave it likelihood enough. When he produced the cap which he removed from the dead body of Geoffrey and showed it to Whiffler, that individual turned it over and over, round and round, and grinned with satisfaction as he read the direction on its lining.

“Leave that cap to me, Mr Trigg,” said Whiffler. “Go home and dress yourself, sir, and get your breakfast, sir; and don’t bother yourself about this business, sir. Let me try my hand at it for a few hours; and if I don’t tighten the hemp about a certain party’s neck, may I never sit for Solon again, or be seen on the walls of the Academy.”

Mr Trigg obeyed the request of his clerk, and did as he was told. Whiffler set out for White-chapel. It was early morning when he reached his destination. Cabmen were sipping coffee at a street oven, which steamed away cheerfully, beside a lamp post. Whiffler called for a cup, and introduced himself into the social circle.

Conversation turned upon the all-engrossing subject of Blount Tempest’s escape from Lancaster. The rank was greatly divided in opinion as to whether the convicted murderer would be re-captured or not. Bets were multiplied.

“It’s a precious chilly morning,” said Whiffler, “despite the time of year. The coffee’s comfortable.”

“You need’unt go far for warmth or for vittuls here,” replied Cabby. “Upper Benjamin’s no

end in the Chapel. Angus' boy's just a taking down the shutters. Ask him if he ain't able to keep you warm."

"Thank ye, kindly," said Whiffler. "That's Angus', is it? And that's Angus' boy, is it? What a boy for business he looks! Thank ye kindly. I will ask him, as you suggest it."

Amidst the fun of the rank, Whiffler strolled leisurely towards the shop, and accosted the boy.

"Mr Angus at home to-day, my boy?"

"Yes," said the boy; "in the downy; he's a-bed."

"Too early for business, am I?" asked Trigg.

"Never too early here, sir. Business comes in with the milk and never goes home till morning."

"Hum! you're a knowing young 'un, you are!"

"And you a jolly bloater, you are, old 'un," responded the boy.

"All right," said Whiffler; "what have you got in the coat line?"

"Everything," rejoined the boy. "Here's your ticket" (pointing to the prices affixed to articles for sale).

“Slap-up tog, from six bob and a kick upwards.”

“A kick!” exclaimed Whiffler.

“Oh my eyes!” laughed the boy, “don’t you know what a kick is? How’s your mother, sir? You’ve not been to school lately, or studied polite literature. There’s our vocabulary! Just you spell over that a bit, and it’ll open your old peepers for you! Ready gilt, mind you! Tick no go! Bad money pinned to the counter.”

Thereupon the boy handed to Whiffler the tailor’s “Card,” which Creevy had displayed to Geoffrey at the Cock.*

“I want a jacket like my friend Creevy bought some time back,” said Whiffler, throwing out his bait. “You know Mr Creevy?”

“Gov’nor does,” responded the boy, “I’ve see’d him; but the proprietor knows him.”

“A good customer anywhere,” remarked Whiffler. “Show me a jacket like that of his.”

* It may be proper to inform the reader that the advertising puff, introduced at p. 179, vol ii., is no invention. It is the verbatim copy of a production actually circulated in Whitechapel. The name and direction of the tradesman who put forth this extremely humorous and clever piece of slang puffing have alone been changed.

“Do you mean like the corderoys as he and the other gent had?”

“Pre-e-e-cisely,” said Whiffler. Whereupon the officious boy displayed the articles which that person’s eyes delighted to behold. He recognized the material which corresponded with the fragment of cloth found under the body of Colonel Massey.

“What’s the price of this?” demanded Whiffler.

“Half a canary,” answered the youth.

“That’s dear,” said Whiffler.

“Cheap as dirt,” answered the boy. “Gov’nor’s got no more of that stuff. T’aint to be had.”

Whiffler was rejoiced to hear it, and made his expensive purchase. He observed the shop contained several caps corresponding to the one in his pocket.

On reaching office, he had the satisfaction of informing Mr Trigg the hemp was growing thick and strong. It would soon be a rope ready for hanging day.

Once upon the track, no time was suffered to elapse in endeavouring to overtake the supposed culprit. As Madame Montgomery had invited Mr

Trigg to repeat his visit in Half-Moon Street, the opportunity was seized. That gentleman suddenly conceived a fancy for Masque Balls. He called upon Madame, and reminded her of her promise. Whiffler attended, to give Mr Trigg the benefit of his well-known taste as a model, regarding costume and colour. The interview was charming, musical, confidential. Mr Trigg busied himself amongst the wardrobe, selecting the gaudiest apparel with which Troubadour or Sultan could decorate himself. The object of Mr Whiffler was accomplished. Madame Montgomery's attention being diverted, he was enabled to give the inferior articles of clothing a close scrutiny; and his self-dedication was crowned with that reward which diligence and perseverance deserve.

He discovered the anxiously-looked-for jacket, which had been purchased at the establishment in Whitechapel.

Had it not been that the vanity of Madame Montgomery was touched by the compliments paid her by Mr Trigg, that female might possibly have had her attention excited; but her eyes were doubly blinded,—first, by her own personal satisfaction in doing a favour to Mr Trigg; and

secondly, by the absence of all suspicion from her mind regarding Creevy's connection with the death of Colonel Massey.

No thought or hint to that effect had ever crossed her intelligence. Far, therefore, from being any hindrance to Mr Trigg and Whiffler, she thoroughly played into their hands; and secured them the opportunity which a breath of suspicion would have prevented.

Madame was altogether a different person when the subject of Creevy's movements was cautiously approached. Mr Trigg, in duty bound, made the usual complimentary inquiries, which were dexterously foiled. Creevy was out of town. He was very busy; very devoted in pushing the interests of their friend, the Basso Profondo.

Mr Trigg upbraided himself for his negligence. That dear little woman, Madame Carbono, how was she? Was she at home? Was her husband at home? How were those interesting and clever foreigners? "They were out," replied Madame, and nothing further could she be cajoled into communicating. Mr Trigg quickly perceived Madame Montgomery was not a woman to be inquired of: and any "pumping" would only

arouse suspicion. Determining to leave well alone, he reiterated his thanks, promised to take the greatest care of the fancy dresses, and to return them the moment the Bal Masque was over.

This said, and a most impressive good-day being taken, Mr Trigg descended to the door, marshalled by the servant-of-all-work, whose hands and face (an ordinary circumstance with lodging-house servants) looked as if her domestic duties were conducted up the chimney.

Whether it be the result of crowded lodgings, or whether it arise from the concern of lodgers in general for the interests and prosperity of their domestic friends, need not be discussed in this place; certain it is, no stranger ever yet called at a lodging-house without encountering some of the confraternity on the stairs, promiscuously emerging from the ground-floor parlour, or entering at the front door, latch-key in hand. This being the universal rule, there could be no cause for surprise in Mr Trigg coming in contact with Madame Carbono, as he passed through the lobby to the street. The little woman was greatly agitated, "taken aback." She had been marketing, and

was returning home, bearing in her hands the produce of the earth.

Mr Trigg felt for her embarrassment, and endeavoured to restore her self-possession by a series of remarks and questions. Madame Carbono had informed Mr Trigg, in a few seconds of time, that she was alone for the present ; Carbono was gone to Italy, on an engagement ; he had left London as soon as the extra nights at the Opera were concluded. Mr Creevy had lately started for the Continent. He and Creevy were together, and the little woman was daily expecting a summons from her husband to join him on his operative tour. She was very much ashamed of meeting Mr Trigg with all her domestic wants in her hands, but she was dependent upon herself. Madame Montgomery, hearing the conversation in the lobby, descended to see what was going on, and check any indiscreet confidence. She was greatly relieved on finding Mr Trigg engaged with the discussion of markets, and “carrying one’s things home for oneself” as an evidence of great independence and superiority to the ridiculous ways of the world. Mr Trigg bowed himself out of the house, leaving both the ladies delighted with

him, and satisfied with themselves. "A charming man," sang the Mesdames Carbono and Montgomery, in duet, as Trigg's carriage rolled away.

"Where shall I order the coachman to drive?" inquired Whiffler.

"To Scotland Yard," replied Mr Trigg.

In Scotland Yard Mr Trigg found he had no need to have been so curious, when calling at the Half-Moon Street establishment, to learn the whereabouts of its master. Mr Montgomery had given notice, many days before to the police, of Blount Tempest's escape in the *Arethusa*.

Warrants had been issued; and Mr Montgomery (as the police supposed in hope of gaining the reward offered for the apprehension of the escaped criminal) had accompanied the detective officer in search of him.

It was time to speak, and Mr Trigg spoke with effect. He gave in detail the evidence he had collected, and the final speech made by Geoffrey Tempest to the groom at Hest-Bank. Of the packet he said nothing, because it could tell no more than the groom had heard from Geoffrey's lips. Mr Trigg ordered Whiffler to bring the

fancy dresses, and produce the jacket he had contrived to include in the bundle.

“I have reason,” said Mr Trigg, “to suspect we shall be able to trace the murderer by help of this article of clothing. There is at Creevy’s a cap,”—and there he came to a dead stop. He was holding out the jacket by the arms, spreading it at its widest, in order to exhibit it for police inspection, when his eye alighted on a torn cuff. A portion of the corded cloth had been rent away from the sleeve of the right arm. Mr Trigg had never hoped or expected to discover such confirmatory circumstantial evidence as this discovery gave. Whiffler was despatched for Mr Probyn, with a request for him to repair without delay to Scotland Yard, and bring with him the strip of cloth which had been found in the Massey Chapel, and was produced upon the trial at Launcester. When Mr Probyn arrived, and the fragment was fitted to the sleeve, it was found to complete the garment. The cloth was the same, the button corresponded, the torn edges of the cloth joined. Whiffler had the satisfaction of narrating his interview with the sharp boy at Angus’ clothing

establishment, Whitechapel. The boy had stated, as within his knowledge and recollection, that Creevy had purchased such a jacket about June last. Angus therefore would be constrained to tell the truth when the investigation was pressed. Such proved to be the fact. Angus knew nothing, and could tell nothing, and could remember nothing, until the detectives, to his great surprise, let him perceive they were fully informed upon the subject of Mr Creevy's purchases. Angus then and there began to remember; and, unfortunately for Creevy, turned up the lining of the collar to see if there was a number, so that he might consult his rough entry. Thereby, Mr Angus provided the last link necessary for the evidence. In wishing to excuse himself and his pretended want of memory, he did his best to put a rope around the neck of his friend and customer, Creevy. The numbers on the jacket and in the entry tallied.

"I think, Mr Probyn," observed Trigg, "the evidence is becoming somewhat strong and conclusive. It is very desirable Creevy should be here to answer for himself. We must not take

away a man's character behind his back. Do you not think, sir, it would be proper to invite his presence among us ? ”

“Where is he ? ”

“In Italy, as I understand, endeavouring to find Mr Blount Tempest, and persuade him to come and be hung.”

“Creevy should be induced to come along with him. Let us consult the Secretary of State upon the subject. Have you ever been in Italy, Trigg ? ”

“Never, sir,” replied Trigg.

“Charming country,” said Mr Probyn, “blue sky, ruins, churches, pictures, and all that sort of thing. I think a short trip to Italy would do you good, Trigg. You have been over-worked lately. Change of scene very beneficial. Suppose you go and look after the welfare of our late clerk, Creevy ! Tell him how anxious we are as to his safety ; and how deeply we desire his return home.”

“Zooks ! bodikins ! ” continued Mr Probyn, “you deserve the greatest credit, Trigg, for the manner in which you have tracked out this affair. You must dine with me to-night at Teddington,

and have a farewell glass at parting. I consider, sir! I do assure you, I consider you have done the rope-trick wonderfully. Untied the noose round one man's neck, and tightened the hemp very tight indeed upon another's. It will take all the cunning of the best 'prestidigi'—what's that awful word?—tators at the Bar, to untie with their tongues the cord you have bound round Master Creevy's windpipe."





CHAPTER XII.

HEARTS OF OAK.

"A health to the captain and officers true,
And all that belong to the jovial crew
On board of the Arethusa."



THE days passed wearily enough in the harbour of Genoa, for Jack Laddler and his crew. Jack had his duty to perform, and did it like a sailor; but receiving letters and reposting them, going backward and forward from the yacht to the post, and the post to the yacht, was wearisome work. Like old Hobson the carrier, he pined for his natural occupation. Great was his delight, when one evening, as the ships in harbour were making it four bells, a small boat came alongside the Arethusa, and a voice demanded, "Is Captain Laddler on board?" Jack was at the gangway in an instant, and right glad to see the face of Mr Trigg. That gentleman had arrived from England, and made his way

directly to the *Arethusa*, to learn where Sir Nigel and his party might be found. Mr Trigg told Jack how urgent his business was.

“Hope there’s something going to be done, sir,” said Jack.

“Plenty, Jack,” replied Mr Trigg, “if we can get through our work successfully. The folks at Launcester will have a hanging day, after all.”

Mr Trigg’s plans and operations were revealed to Jack Laddler ; and Robinson, a detective officer, was introduced on board the *Arethusa*. It was of the first importance, in Mr Trigg’s opinion, to see Sir Nigel, and make sure of Mr Blount’s safety. That done, the scoundrel Creevy could be looked after. Mr Trigg determined to avoid observation and remain on board the yacht, until his arrangements were complete, and he could set out for Florence. Meanwhile Jack Laddler might keep a look-out on shore ; and should there be any tidings of Creevy’s presence in Genoa, or of his having tracked the yacht to her present destination, Jack would be able to put Mr Trigg upon the alert.

On the second evening after Mr Trigg’s arrival, Jack was strolling about the Molo Vecchio, en-

joying his pipe, and singing, in snatches, scraps of his favourite sea-songs, as his eye contemplated the shipping in the Porto, and the graceful lines of his own pet lass, the Arethusa.

He hitched his trowsers, knocked his hat firmly on his head, and re-commenced singing and whistling, with a tol-de-rolish burthen,—

“Bring the can, boys—let us fill it;
Shall we shun the fight? O, no!
Every bullet has its billet,
Man the boat, boys—yeo, heave yeo!”

“She’s a beauty if ever there was one, and in sailing would beat the Flying Dutchman. Blessed if she wouldn’t!”

Then the vocalist struck up:

“When I pass’d a whole fortnight between decks with you,
Did I ever deceive you for one of your crew?
Tol de rol!”

This was followed by a muttering, “Those fellows ought to be astir. It must be nigh upon the time, and I’ve had a goodish spell ashore. I’m tired of these lubbers and their lingo.”

Presently the singer broke out with energy,

“Our Captain hail’d the Frenchman, ‘Ho!’
The Frenchman then cried out, ‘Hollo!’

‘Bear down, d’ye see,
To our Admiral’s lee.’
‘No, no,’ says the Frenchman, ‘that can’t be;’
‘Then I must lug you along with me,’
Says the saucy Arethusa.”

“There they are tumbling out into the cutter.
Out go the oars, and here they come with a will.”

“Four-and-twenty brisk young fellows,
Clad they was in blue array,
And they press’d poor Billy Taylor,
And they sent him off to sea,
With his tol de rol!”

The singer luxuriated in his favourite burthen,
invariably adding a tol-de-riddle.

He again hitched his trowsers, and adjusted his hat, watching the cutter making for the shore with the strong pull and regular dip of a man-of-war’s crew.

While thus employed he was quite aware that he had been long an object of interest to two men, who had taken a post of observation at a little distance. One was an old gentleman in spectacles and broad-brimmed hat, wearing a black suit and gaiters—a clergyman, he seemed, either enjoying a holiday from tutorial or parish duty, or travelling with a pupil. A score of them may be seen any

day in almost every city between Geneva and Rome.

The other was a tall, powerful-built, keen-looking man, respectably dressed certainly, but not in the least like a student preparing for Church or Bar.

The sailor was about to descend to the landing to which the cutter was rapidly advancing. He had already made two or three of those peculiar steps which sea-legs execute on shore, whistling as he went, when he was intercepted.

"Would you oblige me," said the clergyman, baring his venerable head with clerical politeness, "by telling me the name of that beautiful ship at anchor yonder?"

He pointed the ferule of his umbrella in the required direction.

"She ain't a ship, she's a yacht," replied the man, examining his questioner from head to foot.

"Oh, a clergyman isn't expected to be well-informed on such matters. My friend, Mr Smith, and I have been admiring her very much for the last ten minutes, and he will have it that she was built in America."

The sailor, satisfied with his scrutiny of the

person who had addressed him, now turned his glance upon his companion. The observation was more prolonged. They were both strangers to him.

"She wasn't built by the Yankees," he replied, gruffly.

"Is she really English? Dear me, a finer vessel of her tonnage never entered harbour. Mr Smith, did you ever see a yacht float so gracefully?"

"Can't say I ever did," replied that gentleman.

"I should like to know her name!" suggested his reverend associate.

No notice was taken of the hint, the person to whom it was addressed having his attention taken up by another scrutiny of Mr Smith.

"There is a vessel of a similar description owned by a friend of mine," observed the clergyman, confidentially,—“an influential person in my neighbourhood. He told me he should visit Genoa about this time.”

"What's his name?" demanded the sailor, looking very close at the spectacles.

"Sir Nigel Tempest, of Warfdale Tower."

“And the name of his yacht?”

“The Arethusa.”

“Then that’s the craft you were led to expect.”

“How very delightful. Is Sir Nigel on board?”

The sailor did not immediately answer the question.

“What was you a saying of, sir?” he asked, turning a sharp glance upon the spectacles: “Oh, whether the owner’s aboard? Why, you see, I has the command of her, and came ashore for supplies, so it arn’t impossible Sir Nigel may have gone on board during my absence. That cutter as is coming here will take me off, and if you wants to see your friend, I thinks you had better jump into her.”

“Thank you, my good fellow, thank you. Your proposal is very agreeable. What do you say, Mr Smith?”

“I should very much like to go,” replied the person referred to.

“Then this way, gennlemen,” cried their obliging conductor, proceeding to swing his sea-legs towards the stairs, just as the six-oared boat

grounded. The men were all in blue shirts and straw hats encircled by broad ribbons bearing the name of the *Arethusa*.

"This way, gennlemen," Jack repeated, in the hearing of the rowers. "You must be careful, as there's sharks hereabouts."

The sailors jumped to their thwarts, placed their oars in the row-locks, and pulled towards the vessel.

As the boat glided through the water, the clergyman dwelt on his providential meeting with his obliging nautical acquaintance, and how pleasantly he should take Sir Nigel by surprise.

At last they got under the bows of the yacht, over the sides of which other faces were peering curiously on the strangers in the cutter.

"You ain't seen any sharks, have you?" exclaimed the man holding the rudder lines.

"No, Captain Laddler, but they ain't far off," was the reply.

"I did not know that those voracious creatures frequented this coast," observed the clergyman.

"Bear a hand," cried the Captain, "for the particular friends of Sir Nigel."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the reply, and a rope lad-

der was let down over the side till the ends fell into the boat. Mr Smith sprang up it without a minute's loss of time, and his clerical friend followed close behind. It seemed as if the fastenings had not been made secure, for as the first of the strangers was in the act of stepping on the deck, they gave way, and both were precipitated into the sea.

"Two men overboard!" cried the sailors from above, while their messmates below were waiting with boat-hooks to rescue the unfortunate landsmen when they rose to the surface. Mr Smith was pulled in, with no worse result than a ducking, but one of the men caught the clergyman by the hair of his venerable head, which at once gave way in his hand, and the spectacles disappearing, the red crop and freckled face of the clever Creevy became manifest, as he was drawn in with a boat-hook. The umbrella was seen no more.

"My eyes, here's a metamorphoses!" exclaimed the Captain; "we've all heard of the wonderful mill as ground old people young, but the venerable gentleman has absolutely made himself juvenile."

“ Ah, reverend Sir,” said one of the men who helped him on the deck, “you’ll have cause to bless the day as brought you to see after your friends in this here yacht. You’re a matter o’ thirty year younger than when you stepped from the shore.”

“ Now I look at your figure-head,” added Captain Jack, gazing hard at his dripping victim, “you reminds me of a ugly chap I once saw at the lawyer’s in London. You ain’t that impudent son of a gun, are you?”

“ I’ll let you know who I am soon enough ! ” replied Mr Creevy, now anything but like a clergyman ; “ we have important business with your master, and must see him without delay.”

“ O you aloft ! ” shouted the Captain, looking up the spar, “ is Sir Nigel up there ? ”

“ No, sir,” was shouted down ; “ he climbed the sky-scraper to shake hands with the man in the moon, and ain’t had time to get back.”

“ It is Blount Tempest that we want,” said the assumed clergyman, looking savage as a bear.

“ O you aloft ! ” again shouted the Captain, “ is Mr Blount up there ? ”

“ No, sir,” was shouted down ; “ he went a

top the moon-raker to take a hin-side place in Charles's Wain and order fresh sky-blue for his breakfast from the milky way."

"I'm very sorry, gennlemen, as you can see neither of your dear friends just exactly at present," said the Captain.

"I tell you what it is, my fine fellow," now put in Mr Smith, whose dignity was ruffled, "I suspect we have been lured on board this vessel on a false pretence. Is Sir Nigel here, I want to know?"

"What does the lubber mean, Captain Jack?" asked Bill Kittywake.

"I haven't any idea whatsoever," replied the Captain.

"Then I'll let you know what I mean," said Mr Smith, in a humour not to be trifled with, as he pulled out a staff. "I am a police constable, Serjeant Waffer of the D Division, and hold a warrant for the apprehension of an escaped criminal, who I have good reason to believe, is concealed in this vessel."

"You have my express permission to search her from stem to stern," replied Captain Jack, with affected politeness. "Now, men," he cried,

turning to his crew. "One of these good gennlemen imposed upon me as a parson when he were only a sort of journeyman lawyer, and t'other gained my unsuspecting confidence as the parson's friend, when he were only a pleceman. They pretended to be particular friends of Sir Nigel and Mr Blount, neither of whom, I'll be bound to say, knows either of 'em from Adam. But you'll bear witness as I doesn't complain, far from it; I so respects the law that I bids all on you take the greatest care of these good gennlemen, and show 'em every bit of the yacht likely to conceal a cockroach. There is one of Sir Nigel's particular friends aboard, and as he's on his road to see the Baronet, perhaps you might learn all you want to know from him. Will you step into the cabin, gennlemen, firstways?—let me show you the way."

Down the companion ladder Creevy and the Serjeant descended. At the stern end of the cabin a gentleman was seated, immersed in documents which lay open on the table before him. His back was towards the visitors as they entered. At his side stood a tall military figure, like a Serjeant of Guards, in plain clothes. Waffer of the D

Division stared with surprise and puzzled countenance as he recognized a well-known detective and personal friend of his own.

“Why had he been sent out in pursuit of this Mr Blount Tempest?” ruminated Waffer within himself. “Wasn’t one of us enough?”

The noise of feet attracted the attention of the tenants of the cabin.

“Here be some gennlemen as wants to speak with you, sir,” said Captain Laddler, addressing himself to the seated gentleman. That individual hearing himself spoken to, looked up from his papers, rose, and turned towards his visitors.

Thelwall Trigg and Cusack Creevy stood face to face! The pursuer and the pursued were at length confronted.

The instant Creevy encountered the stern, fixed look of Mr Trigg, and perceived that Serjeant Waffer recognized the person standing at his side, the cheek of the guilty man blanched with terror. Waffer saw, and noted.

There needed not any very prolonged explanations between the officers and Mr Trigg. Under any circumstances Waffer had no duty to execute on board the *Arethusa*, for the object of his search

was not there. He had (as he informed his detective friend) accompanied Creevy to Italy, under orders to watch the ports, and re-capture Blount Tempest if they should meet with him. They had been at Malta, Messina, Naples, Civita Vecchia, and also to Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. At the latter place Creevy seemed intimate with one or two friends. While there, they heard of the Arethusa's arrival at Genoa, and hastened off to that place immediately. He and Creevy made certain of securing Blount Tempest on board the yacht.

Mr Trigg's course of proceeding was briefly detailed to Serjeant Waffer. The evidence which had accumulated against Creevy was exhibited, as well as Geoffrey Tempest's dying declaration of his brother's innocence.

Creevy had by this time rallied, and proclaimed Mr Trigg's proceedings a vile conspiracy and a base invention, in order to cover the escape of a guilty wretch.

Mr Trigg smiled, a hard smile, which told Creevy's heart that falsehood, cunning, or bravado was at last brought to its proper market, and proved an unsaleable commodity.

“Well, Serjeant Waffer,” exclaimed Creevy, “you can believe what you like, or think what you like ; you have your duty to perform, and therefore must go with me in search of the man Tempest. If this gentleman thinks he can make anything of his charge, I shall be ready to answer it when—*when* we reach England. As we have been foiled in our purpose here, we had better get back to shore.”

“Robinson,” said Mr Trigg, “do your duty.”

The detective stepped forward, and in another minute the handcuffs were on Creevy’s wrist. “I arrest you,” said Robinson, “on the charge of murder.”

There and then, ensued such violence, such foul-mouthed language, such a frightful pouring forth of oaths and curses, such hurling of threats and menaces at the head of Mr Trigg, that Captain Laddler entreated he might “lock the fellow up until they got his head round.”

Mr Trigg could wait until Creevy’s idle rage had spent itself. “When you reach England,” he said, “I promise you shall answer this charge, and earlier perhaps than you expect. As to your going on shore, it will be English soil which you

will touch next. In one hour hence, this vessel will be out at sea on her voyage home, and Mr Robinson will be answerable for your security. Serjeant Waffer may perhaps wish to land with me."

That functionary, perceiving his occupation gone, gladly accepted the proffered attention of Mr Trigg. The cutter took them ashore, and Jack Laddler received his final directions from Detective Robinson and Mr Trigg to sail without delay, and make for Morecombe Bay. On arriving, Robinson would fulfil his duty and lodge his prisoner in Launcester Castle. Jack Laddler pledged himself by a series of nautical expletives, that, unless the *Arethusa* went to the bottom, Creevy should have no chance of balking justice and Jack Ketch. "It'll be the right man in the right place at last, Master Trigg," said Jack. "He'de a mighty fancy for hanging other folk, had this Creevy, I wonder how he'll like it, his'sell!"

So the devouring spider at last saw his web broken, and the net privily laid for another he was entangled in himself.



CHAPTER XIII.

FLORENCE, AND THE PAST.

*Io, che al divino dall' umano,
All' eterno dal tempo era venuto,
E di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano.*



ANTE'S verse rose upon the Doctor's lips, as, full of sympathy with the feelings which he knew were stirring in Sir Nigel's breast, he surveyed the city. Out of yonder Florence, Geoffrey Tempest had been removed from the terrestrial to the celestial body; from time to eternity; from the cares of his embassy, and the politics of a Grand Ducal Court, to those courts where Justice and Truth reign supreme. Del Paradiso furnished the Doctor with the precise words to express his thoughts. As regards matters of feeling, Sir Nigel was a reticent man. He never paraded his sentiments, much less his sorrows. There are weak human vessels whose eyes perpetually need the sym-

thetic mop, as much as the decks of a craft do the swab. Not such, Sir Nigel. No tear had ever dimmed his eye, since that which drabbled the wing of his fly when first he heard of his brother's decease. He might be forgiven the one which dropped upon his grave.

Geoffrey's name had been seldom heard upon his lips. To Blount alone had his uncle ever spoken much of his father. The sight of Florence seemed to loose his tongue.

"I suppose there are good inns here, Doctor?" inquired the Baronet.

"Those on the Lung' Arno are the best, Sir Nigel, provided you escape the musquitos which infest the houses upon the river banks."

"A practical study of *Del Purgatorio*," suggested Blount.

"I don't fancy being buzzed and bitten out of my sleep," observed Miss Lawson.

"Neither shall you be, Madam," responded the Baronet.

"We must put up at an inn for a night or two, but I suppose we can hire a Villa for ourselves, and be quiet, cannot we? Eh? Doctor."

"As privacy is desirable, I think it the very

best thing you can do, sir," responded the Doctor, with a glance at Blount.

"True," said the Baronet, "we must think of that, and take care of my boy! Where is the Palazzo Ferrari situated?"

"In what is termed Oltr' Arno, the quarter of the city across the river. It is close to one of the convents, called the Carmine, celebrated for its frescoes."

"Would that direction suit us?"

"I am afraid you would find it rather dull. Would you not prefer a Villa outside the town, somewhere upon the hills, so that you might overlook the city, the range of distant hills, Fiesole, and the whole Val d'Arno?"

Sir Nigel was delighted with the idea, and it was resolved that without loss of time Dr Clifford should seek a residence outside the Porto Romana, in the direction of Bellosquardo.

Saddening though their entrance into Florence might be to Sir Nigel, he was not alone in the feeling of melancholy. To Miss Lawson, Florence was more than painful. It was certain to prove exquisitely torturing. She approached it, in ignorance of every detail regarding her sister's

life, and with the sense that the facts she might ascertain would certainly add grief to grief. A selfish woman would have made those around her depressed. Miss Lawson concealed her feelings from every one, except Dr Clifford.

To him the thoughts and anxiety of her mind were laid open. To others, her unruffled behaviour only showed concern for Sir Nigel, the deepest interest in the safety of Blount, and anxiety for the happiness of Mabel.

It was the Baronet's wish to be near the Palazzo Ferrari. There his brother had lived and died.

The Palazzo had ceased to be the residence of the English Minister. Geoffrey Tempest's successor had located himself outside the city, in the direction of Fiesole. Empty and desolate though the building stood, it was probably on that account more acceptable to Sir Nigel. He contemplated with pleasure wandering about its rooms at will. No sooner had the party been installed at the Hotel, than the Baronet ordered a Cicerone to conduct him to the Palazzo. Crossing the Ponte Vecchio, and turning down the streets to the right, they were soon arrived at the mansion. It

remained under charge of an elderly man named Jacobo Mozzi, who opened the great gates to the English gentleman with a politeness of manner which greatly pleased Sir Nigel.

“Does the Signore wish to see the house?” inquired the man, in broken English.

Sir Nigel was delighted to find he could speak that language. “He wished to see the Palazzo.”

“Does the Signore wish to take it by the year, or by the month?”

“Neither,” answered Sir Nigel, “I only wish to see it. I have an interest in the place.”

“Indeed!” replied the man. “Your servant, sir, has lived here many years, and knows the house well.”

“In what position have you been here?” demanded the Baronet.

“Majordomo, Signore, to three of the English Ministers.”

“Their names?”

“Lord H——,” answered the man, “Mr ——, and Mr Geoffrey Tempest.”

The old gentleman took the man’s arm, and hung heavily on it. His frame trembled.

“Mr Tempest was my brother!” gasped Sir Nigel. He could say no more.

The old Majordomo was, as might have been expected, highly delighted and surprised on discovering the name of his visitor. There was nothing he could do to testify his respect for Sir Nigel—for his old master’s brother, that should not be done. How could he serve Sir Nigel?

The Baronet’s simple habits and fancies might be easily served. He wished, in the first instance, to see the Palazzo; then to visit Trespiano, and look at his brother’s grave; last of all, though of the most pressing importance, he wanted a Villa residence upon the hills, outside the gates, which would overlook the city. He especially wished not to be far removed from the Palazzo.

The Majordomo proposed showing the Palazzo first of all, and taking time to consider Sir Nigel’s wishes as they went along. There were various apartments in the Palazzo which shook the Baronet’s nerves with tremor; worst of all, the chamber in which Geoffrey died. The Majordomo recommended himself to the Baronet by the simple and unaffected manner in which, at his request, he described the chamber, its furniture,

the incidents of the fatal illness, and the death of Geoffrey.

“If it is not presuming,” said Jacobo, “I should extremely like to wait upon you myself, Signore Nigel. I was able some years back to purchase a Villa upon the hill through the Porto Romana, on the road to the Poggio Imperiale. It is not a Palazzo, certainly, nor as splendid as many houses on the neighbouring Bellosquardo ; but it is a residence for a gentleman, and always has been. Your brother, Signore, rented it from me at times, and made it a summer retreat.”

“I remember directing letters to him at the Villa Columbaja.”

“That is the very place, Signore. It commands a beautiful prospect ; is close to the city, the Palazza Pitti, and Boboli Gardens.”

“And was my brother’s “retreat,” interrupted Sir Nigel. “It served his turn, why not mine ?”

“You are kind, Signore, to say so ; but I fear it is not as comfortable as Mr Tempest used to make it, with his own furniture. The offices on the ground-floor have long been used as lumber-rooms for the Embassy ; but this does not interfere with the reception-rooms. It is only the old

Chapel and the apartment above (which is seldom required), that have been converted into stores. You had better see the Villa for yourself, Signore Nigel. If it please you, Signora Mozzi and I will endeavour to make you comfortable. If not, we can look out for some other place."

Sir Nigel returned to the hotel in great delight, and the Villa Columbaja was visited by the whole party.

Standing in Florence, upon any eminence which commands a view of the city, looking southward across Oltr' Arno, and behind San Miniato, behind the Boboli Gardens, the Citadel, the Pitti Palace, the dome and spire-like Campanile of the Carmine, and the western extremity of the streets neighbouring the suspension-bridge, it will be seen that the steeps which immediately adjoin the city gates are formed of three hills.

Upon the eastern stand the Boboli Gardens, the Fortress, and the home of Galileo, the Villa D'Arcetri. Upon the western (generally known as Bellosquardo) are some of the handsomest of the modern Florentine residences. Between these two hills, the landscape is partially opened. The third, which retires from its sisters, and fills up

the gap between them, is directly in front of the Porto Romana. After passing through the gate and traversing the ascent of this more remote hill, a road turning off to the left, overhung by an avenue of trees, conducts to the Poggio Imperiale; the highway—Strada di Siena—proceeds straight onward, in the direction of the city so named. Turning out of this Strada, to the right, as if going towards Bellosquardo, in the midst of its own grounds, rises the Villa Columbaja. From its windows and tower the Val d'Arno is overlooked. Florence lies in the valley beneath. The eye ranges over the extent of the city, from the tall, lengthy outline of Santa Croce, with one Capella after another nestling around its transepts and choir,—the dead sleeping upon the church's bosom as the living do on their mother's breast. Beyond Santa Croce, in the centre of this glorious panorama, the most stupendous dome that crowns any Christian church, rises above the choir of the Duomo. The outline of the lengthy nave with its inlaid walls of varied marbles, and its small, circular clerestory windows, is intercepted by the congregation of noble structures which cluster about the Duomo. The bewildered vision becomes

fatigued as it contemplates the magnificent parapet, Gothic arches, and lofty spire of Bargello; the exquisitely light and elaborately decorated tower of La Badia; the stupendous Campanile of Giotto (that pride and wonder of architecture), overlooking the whole city from its tremendous height, and yet, in richness of Italian-Gothic workmanship, finished like a shrine; the octagonal sides of the Baptistery with its lantern roof, shaped like an antique classic shrine; the dome of San Lorenzo, that church so ugly and dirty externally, but all glorious within, which is a monument of the genius of Michael Angelo, Brunelleschi, and Donatello; which is the graveyard of the Medici; which exhibits the porphyry shrine beneath whose slabs repose the remains of Cosimo—Pater Patriæ; which in the Sagrestia Vecchia, the Sagrestia Nuova, and the Medicean Chapel, recalls to us the famous names of many members of that illustrious race. In the centre rise the frowning battlements of the Palazzo Vecchio, the ancient residence of the Gonfaloniere, the home of the Republic, and once the dwelling of Cosimo; while high above its massive quadrangle, springing forth from its deep machicola-

tions, and lifting its sullen front to the sky, looks down that prison tower, of fearful note, in whose "Alberghettino," Cosimo was confined and Savonarola prayed away the final moments of his existence. More distantly, the eye detects the church and cloisters of San Marco, where the Prior passed his stormy days; the square and church of the Annunziata and the adjoining Orfanotrofio—Spedale degl' Innocenti. In front of this wonderful assemblage of mighty fabrics, interspersed with the palaces which have made Florence famous for their architectural magnificence, the long corridors of the Uffizi stretch from Palazzo Vecchio to the Arno, and join the Ponte Vecchio with covered way, along which Cosimo passed to the Pitti Palace, without descending to the street. The river girds the town, its graceful bridges linking it with Oltr' Arno, which the Villa Columbaja overlooks. Beyond the city and the plain, the mountains lift their purple ranges to the sky, and upon the crest of the eastern heights, walls and turrets, churches and villas, the ancient Duomo, San Francesco, and San Dominico, mark the site of the classic city of Fiesole. In the immediate foreground,

on the right, the white marble outline of the Pitti Palace is thrown up against the dark background of the Boboli Gardens, over which the walls of Belvedere hold watch and guard ; while to the left, closing the scene and framing the picture, the heights of Bellosquardo smile in their green verdure, dotted with the villas of Florence's wealthy citizens. Such the prospect beheld from the hall and tower of Villa Columbaja. What wonder that Sir Nigel and his friends stood riveted as they gazed upon such a lovely prospect ! Perhaps its loveliness was enhanced in the Baronet's estimation, by the consideration that his brother had often on a summer's eve, after the duties and cares of his office were discharged, stood where he then stood, and revelled in the view.

"We need not hesitate about our determination, I think," said Sir Nigel, turning to the ladies for an approving look. "We will decide upon accepting your offer, Jacobo."

"It will take us a few days, Signore, to prepare," answered the Majordomo ; "we will have all these boxes and cases moved down into the dismantled Chapel, which is already well stocked. Never mind, we shall find room for them all ; though,

as they came from the Chancellerie and contain effects belonging to British subjects deceased, which may be claimed at any time, I must take a little precaution with them."

Mozzi was assured they would not incommode his new tenants in so large an establishment. They could occupy the rooms already at their disposal. The boxes might be disposed of at Jacobo's convenience. As Sir Nigel was urgent about the matter, the Cicerone undertook to have all the luggage brought up from Florence the following morning ; and as arranged, the next day saw the Baronet and his friends inhabitants of their temporary home.

"This is perfect happiness," said Mabel again and again, as she wandered with Blount through the galleries of the Uffizi, and the Pitti Palace, examining the Art of world-wide fame. The Cicerone was invaluable. He knew every place and object of interest. He seemed to know the history of every person of note who had ever been connected with Florence. He had Dante at his finger-ends. Like many other designing men, he endeavoured to make himself necessary ; and he succeeded so well, that Sir Nigel and Blount

treated him with the greatest favour, making use of his services in all their plans, and movements, and pursuits. A few days after the family was settled at Villa Colombaja, it was arranged with Mozzi to remove the cases which were lumbering the principal Sala. This noble chamber was approached by a broad flight of stone stairs, which ascended from the grand entrance, before passing into the quadrangle of the building. The Sala opened upon the landing at the stair-head. Beyond, it communicated with various chambers, connected one with another, used as sleeping apartments. The windows looked out upon Florence, and Sir Nigel was wishful it should be arranged as an evening withdrawing-room for his friends. Beneath was the vaulted Chapel—long since disused and desecrated. Its architectural embellishments, massive pillars, and carved Italian Gothic caps, its gloomy chancel, and denuded altar, still witnessed to the sacred purposes it had once served. The Chapel had become the storehouse for such property belonging to the Embassy, as was confided to the care of Mozzi. Blount tendered his services in clearing the Sala, and helping to convey its contents to the Chapel beneath. The

Cicerone was particularly obliging and busy on the occasion. Every member of the party was ready to lend a helping hand. Even the Doctor and Sir Nigel found something to carry, in assisting Mozzi. A most heterogeneous mass of boxes, cases, and lumber had been removed, when Miss Lawson caught sight of a trunk which she thought she recognized.

“If we were not in Italy, and so far away from home, I should be positive that trunk was part of my father’s or my brother’s Peninsular kit. You remember my only brother was killed in the war; and my father was left without an heir.—Whose is it, Mozzi? To whom did it belong? Pray examine it, and satisfy my curiosity.”

An external examination gave no satisfaction. A torn and undecipherable direction was nailed to the trunk. It was corded, but not locked.

“It can contain nothing of any value,” suggested Mozzi; “but if my lady would like it opened, we can easily oblige her.”

Miss Lawson accepted the offer, which was at once carried into effect.

“Just as I said, Madam,” exclaimed Mozzi, “it contains nothing but mouldering clothing,

the property of some poor body of whose effects the Consulate has had to take charge."

"Is that the custom?" asked Sir Nigel.

"Constant," replied the Majordomo.

By this time Miss Lawson had examined the contents of the trunk, and the deadly pallor which blanched her cheeks arrested Dr Clifford's notice.

"What is the matter, Miss Lawson! are you ill?" Her clenched hand supported her, as she leant upon the trunk, otherwise she would have fallen.

"My sister's! Bertha's! Bertha's!" murmured Miss Lawson, inadequate to the task of expressing herself more clearly at the moment. But she had proclaimed sufficient to create the liveliest animation among her friends; even the Cicerone was interested.

On examining the contents of the trunk, there were exhibited various articles of female property which Miss Lawson recognized. There was an Indian shawl, a fan, a travelling bag, a pair of child's shoes, a small writing-case filled with letters and papers, and a *Launcester Guardian*, containing an account of the death of Gerald

Massey. The little group gathered around Miss Lawson and the trunk with intensely excited feelings. Mozzi and the Cicerone looked on. Miss Lawson opened the case and glanced at the letters. They were all written by Gerald, and bore date during the autumn and commencement of the winter 1834. The direction was invariably to "Madame Dupont," but internally they addressed themselves to Bertha, "his own dear wife." Miss Lawson was unequal to the effort of reading over such letters—love-letters, tender and devoted, from the man she had loved, pouring forth the secret thoughts of his heart to her own sister. "They will keep until some other day, when I am calmer and more self-possessed," said Miss Lawson, as she proceeded to fold them, and return them to the case. In doing so, she observed a pocket which had previously escaped her notice. It closed with a steel clasp, and might have been overlooked had not her touch told her there was something within. On satisfying herself, she found it held a certificate of the marriage at Sant : Ambrogio, and also a document, under the seal of the Municipality of Genoa.

"You see," observed Dr Clifford, "how careful poor Bertha was to carry about with her, evidences of her real name and social condition. Why should she have passed by the assumed designation of Dupont?"

"That," replied Miss Lawson, "is a question I am unable to answer. Time perhaps will explain."

None of the assembled group had evinced more curiosity than the Cicerone. He regarded the marriage certificate with special concern, and expressed himself greatly interested in the discovery that the Inglese lady who had owned the box, was a sister of Miss Lawson's. "It was a very funny way," he said, "to find out her marriage." The remark was natural enough, and attracted no observation at the moment.

The same evening as the Cicerone was sauntering into the city, across the Ponte Vecchio, he was accosted by an acquaintance, with whom he strolled under the arches of the Uffizi, through the Piazza Gran Duca, and round the domed chantries that cluster about the east end of the Duomo, until they reached the Via della Pergola.

"I have no much time to spare, Tomaso,"

said the friend of the Cicerone, "for de Opera begin one hour. Thou art good boy, amico mio, and shalt be well paid for thy pains! Così, così, molto obligato! it be Sir Tempest! Ben' trovato! bene, bene, Tomaso mio! Tell to me once more about de piccolo box, de pretty tings, and de scritture! Ci devono essere delle lettere?"

"Si! Si! Signore! There were many letters; but most interesting of all the marriage contract of the Madame, Madame Dupont, with the Inglese gentiluomo."

Tomaso's companion was electrified. Pretending to be greatly hurried, he arranged a meeting with the Cicerone for a late hour that evening under a cypress-walk, near the temple, in the Boboli Gardens. The Opera would be over, and the friends could enjoy their evening together. So they parted.

The Opera was Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*. Alboni with her rich, luscious voice, was specially engaged by the Immobili to appear in it, and the house was crowded. Sir Nigel had secured *un a leo al prim' ordine*, to give Mabel and Miss Lawson a treat. The Doctor and Blount determined to remain at home. Mabel was en-

chanted with the brilliant spectacle, which recommended itself by the freshness and novelty of the scene. Sir Nigel was completely occupied in answering the questions and entering into the delight of his young charge. Miss Lawson had neither eyes nor ears for anything off the stage. She watched the progress of the piece with the most rapt attention; and from time to time gave expression to her thoughts by disjointed remarks—as, “How marvellously like!” “I never saw such a resemblance!” “Who can he be?”

“Who can who be?” asked Sir Nigel, catching one of her expressions. “Do you recognize any friend, my dear Miss Lawson?”

“No! sir, not a friend, but a face that I should know among a thousand. Allow me to look at the programme.”

She glanced over the names of the performers in search of the Basso. He was entitled Signore Carbono.

“Look at that, Sir Nigel,” said Miss Lawson. “You see that man now singing with Alboni?”

“Yes, I see him,” answered the Baronet, surveying the figure on the boards through his opera-glass.

“That man,” continued Miss Lawson, “is Carbono.”

“Upon my word, Miss Lawson,” replied the Baronet, “you have the advantage of me. I have not the honour of knowing Signore Carbono. Is he a celebrated Basso? or who is he?”

“Carbono,” said Miss Lawson, “is Dupont.”

No sooner had this startling announcement been made, than Sir Nigel and Mabel felt as much attracted as their friend. The excitement of the trio in the *palco* was far greater than any trio, upon the stage, produced that evening among the rest of the audience. Miss Lawson endured her purgatory as long as she could, but was at length compelled to beg the Baronet to retire. To see that man constantly before her eyes, who was so closely associated with the most wretched passage of her life, was more than she could endure. Before the Opera was half over, the party left La Pergola, and returned to the Villa Colombaja.

The news was received by Blount and the Doctor with the same surprise it had occasioned Sir Nigel and Mabel. The friends resolved

themselves into a cabinet council to consult what steps had best be taken. The one man in the whole world whom Miss Lawson most desired to interrogate, and yet regarding whom she felt an inward dread, had been discovered when least expected. What was safest to be done? How should they act most advantageously and circumspectly?

“I wish to heavens, Doctor, we could whistle our friend Trigg over land and sea, and seat him among us to-night. He is the man for this emergency.”

A loud knocking at the outer gate disturbed the conversation. Men’s voices were heard in the court-yard; and presently the Majordomo was heard ascending the stone stairs to the Sala.

The old proverb was once more verified—Mr Trigg himself entered, following close upon the heels of Mozzi.

With a universal shout of delight his legal visage was recognized. “Your name, my good sir, was only this moment upon our lips. You are the very man we all wanted to see.”

“And you the very people,” said Mr Trigg,

with an overcast expression, "that I most needed to see. I grieve to tell you I am the bearer of very sad intelligence.

"What is it?" said Sir Nigel, "don't keep us in suspense! Let us know the worst at once! what is it?"

"I am deeply concerned to announce the death of your nephew, Sir. Mr Blount's brother—Geoffrey—has been drowned!"

The news was a blow indeed! It shocked the little company grievously; for though there was not one person sitting in the circle who could be said to have loved Geoffrey, yet death, come when or how it will, is a solemn silencer of human differences, and makes men bethink them of other considerations than the poor disputes and small items of earthly discord. It can easily be conceived with what pain this melancholy intelligence affected Sir Nigel and Blount. Geoffrey was their near relative; dependent on the one, associated from infancy with the other. He had lived almost at enmity with Blount. He had grieved and disappointed his uncle. Now he was gone—removed from them for ever, without a word of reconciliation, of kindness, or leave-taking.

It was a bitter cup for the old man and the youth to drink; and Mr Trigg took care they should not drink it to the dregs. He told as brief and simple a tale as he could, and suggested that probably Mr Geoffrey had traced some evidence of Blount's innocence, and lost his life in endeavouring to save his brother.

This said (which was indeed, as far as its revelations extended, the fact), Mr Trigg produced the packet addressed to Miss Massey, confided to his care. Mabel was far too much distressed and concerned for Blount, to allow of her reading the document. She begged Miss Lawson and Mr Trigg to open it, and communicate its contents.

The superscription having been read, the seals were broken, and the enclosed letter was found to run as follows :—

“London, August, 1854.

“Were there not a feeling of self-accusation urging me to write, I should not presume for a third time to intrude myself upon you, Mabel Massey. I pray you to bear with me for a few moments, while, I assure you, the little I have to say will be said for your sake and for your interests, not for mine. You spurned me at Hampton Court. You scorned my love, and despised the offer I made to benefit you.

Again, at Durham-Massey you coldly rejected my advances. Whether it was prudent so to do you shall judge.

“But why should I talk of prudence? I have known none, and observed none myself. Anything I now say, is to do you a kindness. You remember the offer of assistance I made you. It was rejected. I knew there was a scheme hatching to deprive you of the Durham property if you succeeded to it at the death of Colonel Willoughby Massey. I knew Gerald Massey had left written directions to his brother regarding the estate, which he solemnly enjoined him to carry out. A clerk in the office of Mr Probyn, by name Cusack Creevy, had discovered among the family papers belonging to Durham-Massey a packet directed to Colonel Massey, in his brother Gerald’s handwriting. He and I had together taken impressions of the seals, and opened it. It proved to contain a Will leaving the estate to his brother for his life: but in the event of his death, without male issue, bequeathing everything to his child, the daughter of a lady resident in Florence, known by the name of Bertha Dupont. Creevy was so elated by this discovery, he neglected to examine further. I did. I found a letter, the existence of which I concealed, because it gave me information which I could use against Creevy, if necessity arose. The letter stated that Bertha Lawson, sister of Miss Lawson, was the wife of Gerald. The offspring of the marriage, their daughter, was heiress to his estate. In the hour of my triumph, the evidence of which I had intended to possess myself was suddenly snatched from my grasp. It was handed over, before my eyes, to Colonel Massey on the day before he last left London, the day before his death. The papers and the Will, which I believe he never opened (for he said he intended to examine them on arriving at Durham), have vanished.

“They were invaluable to me, *especially after the death of Colonel Massey*. Had you yielded to my ardour when I

knelt at your feet at Hampton Court, I would have burnt those papers, and the only possible evidence to dispute your succession as Colonel Massey's heiress should have perished for ever.

"You scorned me, and I resolved to be revenged. The instrument for my use would have been the Will. It would have deprived you of any right to succeed to Colonel Massey, because it would have deprived him of the power of making a Will.

"*Colonel Massey did die, and sooner than any one expected.* How, you know as well as I. At least—but no matter. By his death the chief living obstacle was removed. He had made you his heiress, but his brother's Will and his brother's child would have unmade you. I was baffled. *The Will vanished at the moment I thought it most secure.* I had learnt from it and the letter, that Gerald Massey had a child. A man and his wife, named Carbono, served Madame Dupont at Florence. Madame Dupont was regarded by them as the mistress of Gerald Massey. Subsequent to the death of Gerald's wife, the infant, having been neglected by the Carbonos, was trafficked in by the Creevys, educated, and introduced into the world under the assumed name of Clara Harcourt. Owing to the loss of the Will and the papers, there is now no means of establishing her claim but by proving that Gerald Massey was married. It is to establish such proof, or (in his ignorance of a marriage) to forge it, that the man Carbono has already gone to Italy, under the ostensible purpose of fulfilling engagements at the chief Italian Operas. His wife (who lives in terror of him, and is his slave) will shortly follow to assist his scheming. Creevy is director of their movements. He goes from place to place as his purposes may require. Mabel Massey, have a care of that man! He is your worst enemy, *as he has proved mine.*

"I sought to do you an injury in my anger, and in my jealousy and hatred of my brother. My life has become a

torment to me, and I suffer the agonies of an antedated hell. The misery that racks me is concealed from the world, but a fiend pursues me, and haunts me day and night, and will give me no peace. I dare not even hint the cause of my wretchedness. That will go with me to my grave, for a life like mine cannot be prolonged. I have sinned against you, Mabel Massey, and sinned against my brother. Ask not how, or where, or when. Be satisfied to know that I confess it and repent it. I dare not look up to Heaven, for its curse is on me. Pardon is not for me. The only peace and satisfaction I can know on earth will arise from doing you one kindly act, in something to repair the wrong I had sworn to work you.

“Blount is in gaol; condemned to die. Your heart is desolate as mine is now. A few weeks back I rejoiced in your misery. Now, with all my soul, I pity you.

“This Madame Carbono can prove everything you have most need to fear. She can identify this daughter of Gerald Massey; and both she and her husband will support with evidence the claims of Clara Harcourt. *Madame Carbono knows the whole truth.* Remember she is her husband's creature, and whatever he dictates she will do. Legitimate, or illegitimate, that girl would succeed under the Will; but in its absence she must substantiate her legitimacy. Gerald Massey was last in the entail, and any child of his is rightful heir to his estates, despite Colonel Massey's tenure, and any disposition he may have made. If the Carbonos prove the marriage, Clara must inherit. These are the facts. You will now know the object of which Carbono is in search.

“Do not suppose I have any concealed or selfish motive in writing as I do. Rumour will have told you the heart you scorned, found refuge in the smiles of Clara. It is true. I did do, and might still have done, all I could, to secure her in possession of Durham-Massey. I thought (and I confess the truth) to have gloried in your defeat and hu-

miliation; and to have become the husband of Clara, the master of Durham.

"If there is a single gentle or good feeling lingering in my wretched heart, it should be for her. She is the only being who ever cared for me. But, look you, Mabel Massey, I would fly to the furthest corner of the earth rather than wed with that girl, or any one in whose veins there ran one drop of Massey blood.

"Were Durham three-fold its value, and she dowered with it, I could not tread its soil, or touch its gold, or take its mistress' hand without polluting it and her. I am unworthy her; unworthy myself; and also the name I bear.

"Time may reveal the truthfulness of my words. So farewell.

"GEOFFREY TEMPEST."

The astonishment which this letter produced was intense. "What does it mean? what does he hint at?" every one asked. The question remained unanswered. One member of the company might perhaps have thrown a little light upon the subject, but he was silent. Every syllable in the letter confirmed Mr Trigg in the suspicion he entertained of Geoffrey's complicity in the death of Colonel Massey. A prolonged silence, the mute expression of amazement, followed the reading of the letter. At length Mr Trigg spoke,—

"I am afraid you will think I have taken a great liberty with your yacht, Sir Nigel, in ordering her home to England. She sailed two days

ago, and is now upon her voyage to Morecombe Bay ? ”

“ I know you would not take a liberty, Mr Trigg,” replied the Baronet, “ therefore you must explain yourself further. Why did you send her ? ”

“ There was a passenger of some importance, whom it was requisite to convey home as speedily as possible. The individual alluded to by Geoffrey in this letter, is on board the *Arethusa*, in charge of a detective officer, and is now on his way to Launcester Castle. I arrested Creevy in Genoa, upon the charge of murder.”

“ Murder,” exclaimed all the company in chorus. “ What new tragedy has been enacted ? ”

“ None, whatever,” replied Mr Trigg. “ Creevy has gone home to answer the charge of murdering Colonel Massey ! He was in search of Mr Blount, with the intention of effecting his re-capture ; but I was in search of him. I came up with him at Genoa, engaged in a careful study of the *Arethusa*. When the fellow least expected it, he found himself with the iron bracelets of Scotland Yard about his wrists.”

Mr Trigg had his full employment for the

evening in narrating the events which had occurred in England subsequently to the departure of the *Arethusa*. The circumstances connected with the death of Geoffrey and the successive portions of the evidence against Creevy, as they were discovered, were detailed. The declaration also of Geoffrey regarding the innocence of Blount, engaged particular attention. Such a catalogue of painful details it has seldom fallen to the lot of a single family to hear. The occurrences of the evening were in due course narrated to Mr Trigg, who learnt with the utmost satisfaction, the discovery Miss Lawson had made at the Opera.

Mr Trigg flattered himself he had arrived in the very nick of time. "I wonder," said he, "whether the little woman has joined her husband. If she is here, I shall be delighted to renew my acquaintance. Bless my life! how astonished she will be to see me. That dear little confiding creature would be of the greatest assistance to us, if I could only meet with her now."

The conversation had been prolonged until a very late hour. Sir Nigel was astonished to discover it was long past midnight before any one had a thought regarding the time. "Come,

come," said he, "we shall be talking here until morning if we do not get to bed. We can discuss these matters fully to-morrow, and consider what movements we ought now to take. Creevy at least is safe; and there is no fear of his escaping us. We are on the spot, and must satisfy ourselves regarding this business of our little Gazelle's. It seems, my dear friend," continued the Baronet, addressing Miss Lawson, "that we are in possession of evidence which this gang of scoundrels would give a great deal to obtain. Poor little Mabel! Miss Lawson's discovery may cost you much, my darling. It will indeed be hard if Bertha's marriage is to rob you of Durham-Massey."

"Bertha's marriage!" exclaimed Mr Trigg. "What is this? Have you obtained any information regarding her?"

Miss Lawson pointed to the trunk standing on a table, and informed Mr Trigg of its contents; as also of the search they had made in Genoa, led on by the entry which she had seen in the Book of Hours.

"I should extremely like to examine these papers for myself," said Mr Trigg; "will you allow me to take them with me to my room?"

The leave was granted. Mr Trigg retired to a small chamber adjoining the Sala, which had been appropriated to him. The rest of the gentlemen took their departure to their respective rooms upon the opposite side of the quadrangle. Miss Lawson and Mabel lingered behind, and remained in conversation.

“It is useless my going to bed,” said Mabel; “I should never close my eyes. I feel as if my brain could hardly bear the pressure of such an accumulation of dreadful incidents. It is a lovely starlight night, dear Miss Lawson; will you sit a little while in this recess? We can watch the stars, and talk.”

Miss Lawson readily assented. The girl’s mind reflected the state of her own, and she was willing to review the incidents of the day. A couch was accordingly drawn into the deep bay-window. Miss Lawson seated herself, so that she could watch the twinkling lights of the city and the higher lights which canopied it. Mabel knelt by her side; and the lamps being extinguished, they continued leaning over the balcony, at times discussing in low tones the letter of Geoffrey and his tragical end; at others preserving a lengthened

and profound silence, buried in their own troubled thoughts.

The bells of Florence tolled quarter after quarter, and still they remained motionless. Mabel's head was couched on Miss Lawson's breast. Sometimes she looked up through the dimness of the night to catch a glimpse of her face, and murmur a word of love into the heart which she knew was so sorely grieved.

"Hist! what is that?" whispered Mabel, as a slight noise attracted her attention. "Did you not hear some one breathe?"

"No one, darling. It is your own excited mind, or perhaps it may be Mr Trigg stirring in the adjoining room."

Mabel timidly turned her face round, and peered through the dusk into the room. She became re-assured. "It was her foolish fancy!"

They continued in silent thought, gazing out upon the night-lights of the city, when Mabel started again.

"I am certain I heard some one moving," she whispered in Miss Lawson's ear, while her heart beat violently with fear.

Miss Lawson grasped her wrist, and pressed it,

commanding silence. She had heard the movement herself. The two ladies, wrapt in the darkness, sat motionless and stricken with fear, and yet uncertain whether their ears had warned them correctly. They held their breath, and listened.

"Hu-u-sh," said Miss Lawson, in the softest possible voice. "You are right; some one is moving. Keep perfectly still, my child."

"There, there," continued Mabel; "look there!" as she pointed into the midst of the Sala; "see! see! there is a dark outline, darker than the darkness. See! it approaches; look! there, there," and the girl's overwrought feelings could bear no more; she uttered a faint scream, and fell senseless upon the ground.

The next instant Miss Lawson herself descried the figure of a man through the gloom. She started from her seat and sprang towards him, but as she did so a strong arm seized her, while a hand was pressed upon her mouth.

"Zitto! Zitto!" muttered a voice, "Chi è? Dove avete messo le cose? (Silence! Who is there? Where have you put the things?)"

"Villain! Help, help, help," shouted Miss

Lawson, disengaging herself, as she perceived the man's hand laid upon the trunk and about to plunder it. He seized her by the throat, so that she could not utter another sound, and brandished a glittering dagger in the air, with which he was about to stab her, when a fierce blow disabled the upraised arm, and struck the weapon to the floor. Before the man could turn to protect himself from the assailant in his rear, his arms were grappled behind his back, and he was flung prostrate on the ground. Mr Trigg had been aroused by the noise, had rushed from his adjoining room, and had pinioned the burglar to the floor. With his knees planted upon the man's chest, and his arms held tightly down, Mr Trigg took up the cry, "Help, help, help."

The screams quickly aroused the inmates of the Villa, who came rushing into the Sala, to render assistance.

"Come here, Mr Blount," called Mr Trigg; "help me to overpower this man. Let some one bring a light."

Dr Clifford and Mozzi speedily returned with tapers, whose illumination revealed Blount and Mr Trigg contending with the violent struggles

of a stalwart man, stretched upon the floor, while hard-by, lay the prostrate figure of Mabel.

Miss Lawson was standing by the trunk she had protected, looking down upon the wrestlers. Ropes were procured, and the man, after a few minutes' delay, was secured.

"Bring the candles," said Mr Trigg; "let us see the fellow's face, that we may know him again when next we meet."

The light flashed upon his swarthy cheeks and black beard.

"At last—at last, we are met," shouted Miss Lawson. "It is Dupont."

* * * *

In the cells of Bargello, the Basso Profondo, the incomparable Carbono, found himself securely incarcerated.

"At last," as Miss Lawson had said, she was confronted with the man Dupont. Whatever other name he might assume, that was his name, by that alone she knew him. He had been too closely associated with her concerns and with her family. The day of reckoning was arrived. In the midst of consultations as to the most prudent manner of dealing with their prisoner, in order to gather from

him the information he could give, Madame Carbono arrived from England to join her husband. Whatever senses the poor little woman might be possessed of, under ordinary circumstances, were completely put to flight by the desperate state of affairs which she discovered upon her arrival. Mr Trigg was ready, and waiting, to renew his amiable relations with the dejected creature. Though her husband had ever treated her like a brute—true to her woman's nature, she had clung to the man she loved. Now, to discover him immured in a prison, with two of the gravest charges threatening him, was more than she could bear. She sought out Sir Nigel with prayers, and tears, and entreaties. She implored him for her sake to be lenient. She flung herself at Miss Lawson's knees, and begged her pity for a forlorn woman. She swore there was nothing on earth she would not do, if Miss Lawson and Sir Nigel would be merciful to her husband.

Miss Lawson coldly and imperturbably heard her out. Then she called her friends around her, and said, "You have heard this woman's protestations. I will prove them. Hear me, woman; and according as you answer and deal honestly with

me, so will I act by you. Listen to these words: 'This Madame Carbono can identify the daughter of Gerald Massey!' 'Madame Carbono knows the whole truth!' Those words were written by Geoffrey Tempest, whom you knew well. He and you and others sought to prove that Clara Harcourt was the daughter of Gerald Massey. Is she so?"

"I believed it, Signora," replied Madame Carbono, "and so did Mr Geoffrey."

"Have a care, have a care, woman. Do you know it? Can you swear it?"

The woman hesitated.

"Do you know whether Gerald Massey was married or not?"

"I cannot say. I did not believe he was at the time, because the lady I attended in this city was called by the name which I knew my husband bore."

"That lady was my sister. Her maiden name was Bertha Lawson. Did you know that?"

"I did not."

"She had a child. You nursed that child?"

"Yes, Signora, I did."

"You attended my sister to the time of her death?"

“I did, and followed her to her grave where she lies, in San Miniato.” (Miss Lawson’s voice trembled as she proceeded with her questions, after learning this fact.)

“And what became of the child after her death? What became of my sister’s property, her jewels, and her money?”

Madame Carbono hesitated again. Her pale face flushed with crimson, and her tongue faltered.

“Speak, woman! speak the whole truth, that I may verify it.”

“You can do so, Signora! That trunk will testify for me. We stole the property of your sister. All that was valuable, my husband, Carbono, removed before she was dead. The rest was surrendered to the Consul in that trunk. And the child—”

“Yes! the child! Did you bring her to England? Did you sell her for money to those people, the Creelvys?”

“No, Signora, we did not.”

“Then the whole statement of Clara Harcourt being given up by you to the Creelvys is a fabrication?”

“Signora! pity me, forgive me. It is every word false! Carbono made me swear it.”

Every face in the company exhibited surprise at this confession. The most intense interest followed the rest of the examination as it progressed.

“Since that statement is false, what did you do with my sister’s child after her death?”

“I and Carbono made away with her.”

“Made away! oh, horrible! do you mean you—you—?”

“Oh, no, no, Signora, not that—not that,” exclaimed Madame Carbono. “We deposited the child at the grid of the Spedale degl’ Innocenti. A dreadful night it was for us. We were chased like guilty people along the streets, and were scarcely able to complete our plans.”

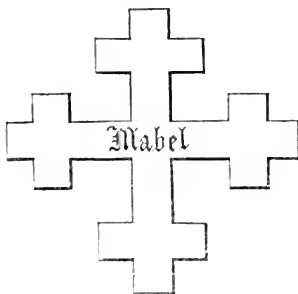
“So,” said Miss Lawson, “you deposited the child. Did you leave any mark or token about it, whereby it might be recognized hereafter?”

“I tied round the baby’s neck a silver cross, engraved with her name.”

“And the name? Speak! speak! speak! The name—the name?”

“The name was Mabel.”

“Is this the cross?” asked Miss Lawson, snatching the ribbon tied round Mabel’s neck, and exhibiting the ornament which was pendent to it.



The little woman stood speechless. Her head, her lips, her look signified assent; but long before a sound could pass those lips, Miss Lawson’s arms were flung wide, and the child, her sister’s child, was locked in their passionate embrace.

“Close to my heart—close, close, my Mabel, my lost Bertha’s legacy of love,” said the noble lady, as she clasped Mabel to her breast, and sobbed aloud over the charge, in whose welfare the care of her life had been concentrated.

“Nature has spoken loudly,” continued Miss Lawson, “through these long years, bidding me love you, darling, as my own child. And you are mine, are you not? My own flesh and blood!

You see, Sir Nigel, how a good Providence shielded the orphan, and brought her to her own home. Come hither, Blount. Mabel is my child, sir, and I her guardian. What have you to say that you should steal her from me? I am Aunt Lawson! Do you mind me, sir? Ask my leave, and ask it humbly and prettily, or you shall not have her. There, sir, I give her to you. She is my gift. Remember it, and be grateful, and love me a little, if you can, for the sake of the gift, if not of the giver."

* * * *

The long-gathered darkness was at last dispelled. Madame Carbono learnt, to her exceeding dismay, that the person who had pursued her and her husband on that night, in 1835, when they thought to have rid themselves of the child by depositing it in the *Spedale degl' Innocenti*, was none other than the infant's own uncle, Colonel Massey, successor to the estates of Durham. She also discovered how grossly she had been imposed upon by Creevy, in accepting, as the recovered child, the reputed Clara Harcourt. Convinced of the false role she had been deluded into playing, the wretched woman faithfully and honestly pro-

mised to do her part in establishing the rights of Mabel. Miss Lawson made it a positive condition that before she consented to relax the grip of the law upon the imprisoned Carbono, he should make a complete confession of all his villanies in the presence of Mr Trigg and of proper authorities.

Carbono — quondam Dupont, finding his secret life disclosed and all his plots betrayed, was as anxious as his wife to purchase pardon on the dictated terms. He confessed to everything, and for the sake of freedom painted himself in the dark colours that truth demanded. In addition to his revelations of the past, he supplemented his history with the latest intelligence. The Cicerone was his spy. The marriage contract, in the trunk, would have supplied him with the intelligence which was most needed to support Creevy's case on behalf of Clara Harcourt. Having heard of its discovery, and of its being deposited in the trunk, he had resolved to gain possession of the document. For that purpose he had effected an entrance through the Chapel beneath the Sala; and had gained the room by means of a winding staircase in the thickness of the wall, which opened by a panel into the chamber.

Miss Lawson was at length fully informed. Mr Trigg expressed himself satisfied; and "if he was satisfied," as Sir Nigel said, "he supposed every one else ought to be." So the prisoner of the Bargello once more regained his liberty. The charges against him were suppressed, and the little loving woman whom he had treated like a brute, loved him still, and loved him to the last, in the obscure life which he led during the remainder of his days.

"I fancy," said Sir Nigel, when the domestic excitement in which they had lived was somewhat calmed, and Blount and Mabel enjoyed the most perfect satisfaction which any two human beings could desire,—*"I fancy we have done our work in Italy; and if these young folks have determined to make themselves miserable and be married, we had better begin to think of turning our faces once again towards home."*

With what a feeling of relief—the happiness of security—did Blount devote himself during the remainder of their sojourn in Florence, to the pleasant task of visiting, in company with Mabel, the Churches and Palaces and Galleries which had been the dream of their days on board the

Arethusa. Despite the attractions of the Uffizi, the Tribune, and the Venus de' Medici, the glories of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Leonardo di Vinci, there were other spots in Florence which recommended themselves more sympathetically to their admiration. Chief among these were the Baptistry, the Spedale degl' Innocenti, and the Convent San Marco. The Piazza della Annunziata (with its encircling arches, its statue of Ferdinand, and the noble loggia of the church, and the grate of the Orfanotrofio, in front of which Mabel had been cast a deserted orphan) was a spot towards which her footsteps often turned. In the little Chantry behind the high altar of the Spedale Chapel she lingered many a day, touched by the feeling of that masterpiece of Ghirlandajo, the 'Adoration of the Magi'—fitting decoration for the walls of such a place, recalling Him who was the orphan's friend, and taught mankind that in heaven

"The children's angels always stand
Before my Father's face."

Of her bounty and her gratitude, the Innocenti of Florence had reason to remember the girl, whom the touch of a bell would once and for ever have made their sister.

The Piazza della Annunziata and the Piazza San Marco adjoin one another. How marvellously was Mabel's history associated with both. In the one she had been rescued from the worst of all human oblivion; from the other had gone forth the Book which was to bear upon its page the record that should rescue her name from taint, and secure to her the possessions of her ancestors. Those convent walls, within which no woman's step may tread, were, through the influence of Dr Clifford, freely opened to one who could put forth so strong a claim to see the cell bearing the inscription :

Has Cellulas inhabitavit P. Hieronymus : Savonarola : Vir Apostolicus.

With what delight did the holy Frati gaze upon the Book of Hours, and compare its illuminated pages with the Missal they possess, adorned by the genius of Fra Angelico.

How eagerly did they exhibit the frescoes from that mighty hand, which adorn their convent walls, and make it world-famous—the head of St Peter, the Annunciation, the Madonna, the Coronation of the Virgin, and the greatest of all treasures of

the Byzantine school, the Crucifixion, in the Chapter-house. If Fra Angelico had not worked upon the Book of Hours, it was almost certain Fra Bartolomeo had. He was Savonarola's associate. He had sat under the damask-rose tree and listened to the apostolic preacher. Mabel gazed upon the slender tree—that tree with so proud a pedigree, with an ancestry extending over nearly four centuries of time.

It was their last day in Florence. Mabel and Blount had formed strong friendships with several of the Frati, who delighted to converse about their famous Prior, and defend his memory against the malicious aspersions which vulgar prejudice invariably delights to heap upon true greatness of character and singleness of heart. “He was a man,” said Frate Anselmo, “in closer communion with Heaven than any Churchman of the age, in advance of which he lived. He was the Angelic Doctor of Italy, and Italy has learnt to know his worth.” *

* Thanks to Villari's *Life of the Vir Apostolicus*, his spirituality of character, fervour of eloquence, and intense yearning for the freedom of Italy, are at last known and appreciated.

"Though it reviled him, and persecuted him to the death," observed Blount.

"Vero! vero! Signore, cosi è," replied the Frate. "The masters of our convictions to-day were the martyrs of our prejudices yesterday."

When Blount and Mabel took their final, lingering adieu of San Marco, the soothing rays of declining day were slanting from tower to turret, from dome to Campanile. Homeward turning, they strolled for the last time through the Boboli Gardens, the pride of Cosimo, which at his creative bidding clambered up the hill under whose protecting covert the Pitti Palace nestles. Pursuing the steep walk towards that Grotto adorned with the statues to which Michael Angelo gave form and feature, they passed under the ivy-clad walls surmounted by the nodding towers of Belvedere; along dusky alleys, out of whose masses of shadow Bacchanals and Fauns peeped and leered; through groves of cypress and of cedars, dense, dark, and solemn as funereal aisles draped to celebrate a Medicean death; beside banks of bay and myrtle underwood, fresh and green as wreathes of Immortelle to crown a

Ducal grave ; and up flights of marble stairs leading from terrace to terrace, arched with awnings of creepers weaving their tendril shoots into a fretted umbrage over the embowered avenues, until they climbed to the platform overlooking the city and the vale. Around the valley gathered the everlasting mountains, like sentinels, armed with their javelins of jagged pines. Purple haze flung a royal garment about the courtly hills, whose heads were invested with coronets of saffron light ; and amid the mellowing tints of even, Fiesole sparkled in the farewell glistening of the sun, like an antique gem hanging on the bosom of some peerless form of beauty.

“Firenza la bella !” said Blount, after a prolonged, speechless gaze of admiration. “Poet could have no grave more beautiful. Dante could have devised no earthly Paradise more worthy of his verse. Our parents have made this their resting-place, my little Gazelle, and out of it we have constructed a home : I pray to God, a life’s happiness. Our friend, the Frate, believes, and so do I, in a closer union between the tenants of the Seen and the angels of the Unseen realm than things earthly apprehend. “Savonarola,

darling, was no visionary! At the rack and in the supreme moment of his life, he boldly proclaimed the true experience of his heaven-aspiring soul."

"Do you think the beings gone hence, busy themselves in the material things of earth?" asked Mabel.

"God forbid! Spirit their source, it is only in man's spirit that celestial powers operate. So Savonarola taught. So I believe. Let us do all we can, to raise our earthly thoughts and feelings heavenward, and link them in communion with the true spiritual world, as the great Prior did. If not that, let us not degrade to earth, as if plucking stars from the firmament, the things that are spiritual, *because they are unearthly* and eternal. Beneath that tower of San Miniato your mother rests. In that hill-side yard at Trespiano my father's ashes slumber. Over both, yonder clear heaven looks calm, solemn, and serene. Are there not ministering spirits sent forth from thence to guard and watch us on our way? I know there are! In their earthward embassy they can have no holier office than to shield with their protecting wings the love of those they love.

“My own sweet Mabel, they hover over, and in this hush of even, bless us now!”

* * * *

The night before they left Florence, Aunt Lawson saw a marble slab fixed into a stone within the Nave of San Miniato, and on it inscribed:—

The Honble. Bertha Massey,
wife of
Gerald Massey, of Durham-Massey, Esq.,
England.
Died August 5th, 1835, Ætat. 24.
R. I. P.





CHAPTER XIV.

“FOR ENGLAND, HOME, AND BEAUTY.”

WHEN Clara Harcourt discovered she had been made the dupe and tool of the designing Creevy, she declined allowing the impending suit of *Massey v. Massey* to proceed in her name. For once in the history of the Courts, the client got the oyster and the lawyers got the shell. “The gentlemen of the long robe” had been whetting their forensic appetites for a length of time upon the anticipation of a feast of fat things in briefs and retainers and refreshers! But they were disappointed; and Clara proved herself a better and higher-minded woman than her enemies or flatterers had ever suspected. As soon as she knew she had no pretensions to being the child of Gerald Massey or heiress to his estates, she frankly wrote to her old pupil and friend, Mabel. For herself, she repudi-

ated any claim, and also the conduct of those who had imposed upon her. She asked Mabel to pardon her, if in her domestic misery and subjection to the Creelvys, the prospect of independence and wealth had for a moment blinded her mind or hardened her heart to the misery which she would have been instrumental in bringing upon her old, kind friend.

The career of Clara, for the future, won her as much respect and admiration, as its past had brought down upon her jealousy and slander. The poor but honest parents who had been induced to part with her to the Creelvys, became the objects of her solicitude, and of a tender love, the only love of which her heart remained capable. Despite his faults, and all the charges brought against him, Clara cherished in her breast a long, lingering, life-time passion for Geoffrey Tempest. She would hear nothing said against him; and the failings which her sense could not disguise, her one true and earnest affection excused.

“ Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight ;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—oh ! never more.”

As a teacher of music and singing, she passed her years away, supporting her parents and giving them a home. A large circle of friends welcomed her at their firesides, and delighted in her success. After the excitement, adulation, and vanity of the career she had been plunged into, she came forth from that fiery furnace assayed and purified. The dross of the world was purged away; and Clara in fulfilling homely offices, and labouring hardly for the good of others, forgot self. The love which chastened her life, and like a cloud shadowed its prospects with subdued feelings and effects, wrought in her, only good. Labour became her work of love. Self-will was lost in self-dedication to secure the comfort of those who had claims on her efforts. She learned and realized the truth—

“Life may have holier ends than happiness.”

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No sooner had the Arethusa reached English shores, and entered Morecombe Bay, than Creevy under proper guard was consigned to the Castle at Launcester. The revulsion of feeling in the public mind was extraordinary. Sympathy and

concern had been universally felt for Sir Nigel and his family from the commencement of their sorrows and misfortunes. Joy, which defied all bounds, broke forth from rich and poor, from high and low, when it was discovered that Blount had been the victim of a false accusation, and the real culprit was secure. Jacob Price proved not to be the fool he was taken for. His humble cottage attracted many a visitor, anxious to hear the oft-told story over again.

“Au toud tey sooa,” said Jacob, “neau nor no mon boh Maester Twigg ever beleaved meh was cartain sure an seed tu men escapen fra’ th’ Priory.”

“Boh! Jacob,” people would say to him, “where’s th’ second?”

“Nay, nay, au canno’ tell wher’ eh be neau, au onley kno’ wher’ eh wur then.”

As soon as it was announced that the Baronet and Blount were returning from Italy to Warfdale Tower, the good people of Launcester determined upon a public demonstration. A procession met them at the Station, where an address from his neighbours and friends, and from the town itself, was presented to the old man, heartily congratulating

him on the vindication of his nephew's character and the demonstration of his innocence. It was no formal address, but eloquent with earnest words. Blount was welcomed home among friends and acquaintances, assured of the sorrow with which every citizen had beheld him subjected to the bitter trials he had endured; but likewise assured that language failed to express the universal rejoicing which his innocence and safety and the free pardon of the Crown, had excited among the people. Neither was Mabel permitted to escape. Although she had shrunk into the corner of the carriage to avoid observation and conceal the emotion she vainly struggled to subdue, the address compelled her to present herself. It told her of the sincere pleasure with which her succession to the undisputed possession of her ancestral estates was contemplated by the County at large; and glancing at her intended union with Blount, it prayed for God's blessing upon her and him, and many years of prolonged life to Sir Nigel, that he might be spared to witness their happiness, and to hear once more the sound of children's voices at Warfdale Tower. That night the streets of Launcester were crowded with people

from the country round to witness a torch-light procession. "Welcome Home" waved on banners and blazed in transparencies. A mock corporation, with mace, and Mayor, and Aldermen; mock knights, mock representatives of kings, heroes, warriors, painters, poets, and trades, paraded the streets. An ox (but not a mock ox), garlanded with flowers, was carried upon a lorry in the procession, and eventually roasted in the market-place. The day was a universal holiday; and with pleasantry, and mirth, and good-humoured fun, the old town rang; and torches blazed, and rockets filled the air with coloured stars; bells pealed, civic fathers toasted the occasion, and nimble feet danced out their delight until the broad dawning of another day.

A few days after Blount's return, he received a message from the Castle at Launcester, informing him the convicted prisoner, Creevy, strongly desired to see him, wishing to communicate some information of importance. Blount complied with the request. It was the first time he was ever face to face with the murderer, the man who had plotted his destruction.

“I am here at your request,” said Blount; “what can you have to say to me?”

“More than you think of, perhaps,” replied the prisoner. “This crime, you see, as the poet says, is a burden too hard to bear upon one pair of shoulders. I suppose you’re very happy now, Mr Tempest. You’re all right, you are; and the noose has slipped from your neck to mine. Very good, indeed, and very cleverly done of my friend Trigg. I owe him one for that; I wish I had the chance of paying him. You see, truth’s truth, Mr Tempest, as sure as cheese is cheese. I don’t know much about truth, but I’ll give you a bit of it, to make you happy. There’s nothing like being happy, is there?”

“Provided we are not happy at the expense of others.”

“Why, there you’re right, Mr Tempest. That was well said, and gave me a dig under the fifth rib. You mean me. Yes! yes! I know that clear enough. But it’s your happiness I’m thinking about now. I can tell you something that’ll make you as jolly as a lark.”

“Say on, sir, and say quickly; for I will be

candid with you, and confess your company is not agreeable."

"I thought not," said Creevy, "though your brother enjoyed plenty of my society."

"My brother!"

"Ay! your brother! we were thick as thieves."

Blount shuddered at the idea of Geoffrey being associated with such a wretch.

"I don't mind telling you, Master Blount, I love you so. Thick as thieves, indeed; we were pals in more than that. We did the trick together."

"Trick! What wretched jargon is this? what do you mean?"

"I mean we did for Colonel Massey together; and I thought it would make you happy to know it. Ha! ha! Master Blount, 'that's news indeed,' ain't it? as the Immortal says. What a set of fools your people were at that trial, to be sure! Not one of them ever thought of Geoffrey, when Hinde swore he had seen you in fustian rigging, walking towards that Priory place! It was your brother he saw, Master Blount—your brother, sir, your precious brother! What strong family likenesses there are, ain't there, among your folks?"

If I had a smelling-bottle, I'd lend it you. To be sure, you do look white about the gills."

Blount staggered and sank upon a stool. Creevy cared not. It was his mission to torture Blount. He had successfully done so in his own flesh once. He did it again through his brother now.

"Honour to his family, wasn't he? That old fool Price with his bungling story was quite right. There were two of us. He saw straight enough that time. I was one, sir" (shouted Creevy, glaring at Blount, and foaming with maliciousness), "and your precious brother was the other."

Blount was speechless! The story was too horrible, too revolting.

"There's nothing like making a clean breast of it," continued Creevy, "so for your satisfaction let me tell you it was I who took the pistol from your case at Oxford."

"What for?"

"To use it."

"And *you* used it?"

"I should think so."

"Thank God! thank God!" gasped Blount.

“Funny,” said Creevy, “that’s just what I think I heard Master Geoffrey jawing when he knew you had escaped from prison.”

Blount sprang from his seat, and in his excited feeling looked as if he would have trod upon the viper stinging him.

“Look here, you villain,” said Blount, with raised arm and clenched fist, and with menacing look; “silence that dreadful tongue of yours, or I shall not be able to contain myself. I see through you, and can decipher the devil’s part you have played, as well as if I had it written in a book before me. It is you who misled that wretched boy. You read his character, you saw the bad points of his disposition, and you cherished them until you led him into crime. His was not the hand which did that awful deed.”

“How do you know? Talk of what you understand.”

“Doubly-dyed in your villany, I know that, for you have incautiously confessed it. You told me it was you who used that pistol.”

“Did I? Then I was a fool.”

“I thank you for your folly. Whatever my brother may have done, however bad he may have

been, or whatever part he took in your wicked schemes, his was not the hand that robbed a fellow-being of his life. I say, 'Thank God,' for that! You say he used those words when he heard of my safety. He was not so bad as you tried to make him. He felt compunction, remorse—perhaps repentance. You had successfully imposed upon him as well as on others. I have evidence of the fact, for he wrote to Miss Massey, and unconsciously revealed your base plot against her happiness and prosperity."

"Did he? Then may——"

"Hold your wicked tongue, villain; he is beyond your reach, and gone to his account. At that great assize [before which he has been arraigned, he has answered for his misdeeds, and my humble prayer is that the Judge of all may have had mercy on his soul. I thank you, even you, for this interview. You have missed your mark, and the torture you thought to give has brought healing with it. No human ear shall ever learn your fearful tale. His name shall not be disgraced, and, I thank you, I thank you. Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing, but to curse you and yours."

“Curses from such lips as yours fall harmless, Creevy. Better think of the curse which is on your own head.”

“Bah! bah!” laughed the culprit, with a demon’s laugh. “If you want to preach, find those who will listen. I won’t, that’s flat.”

“Then farewell,” said Blount. He left the cell; and shortly afterwards the condemned criminal died as he had lived, fierce, violent, desperate. The scaffold which his busy hands had sought to build for the innocent, was constructed for himself. The good man inherited the land, and the wicked perished from off the face of the earth.

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“Blount, darling,” said Mabel, on the eve of their wedding-day, “let us have a stroll together. I should like a quiet hour to ourselves in the Priory. The inscription on the tablet in the Chapel has been finished, and I want to see it. I seem to have two fathers resting there. My own I never knew; my second father sleeps in peace by his side. Perhaps they are together now in a better land, and look down upon their child. A prayer beside their grave will do my heart good, Blount; and a voice of thanksgiving

for the goodness with which we have been blessed will be no unfit preparation for the morrow which is to make us one for ever. Come, darling, let us go together."

They reached the Massey Chapel, as the autumn sun-set kindled the crimson and golden tints upon the woods of Durham-Massey. The valley was peaceful and still. The ruins, silent and sombre, prompted solemn thoughts and reverential words. Long did they stand before that simple tablet, which bore a fuller record now, of the tale of mortality. It recorded the death of Gerald Massey, who was drowned under the Aqueduct of Launcester; and of his brother, "Colonel Willoughby Massey, C.B., who was barbarously murdered at the foot of the Prior's Tomb in this Chapel." The lettering proceeded to say that the Tablet was erected to the memory of those whose names it recorded by "the last of their race, Mabel, the only child of Gerald Massey, Esq., and of the Honourable Bertha Lawson, his wife."

Mabel knelt upon the grass before the monument, upon the very spot where her second father, her uncle, met his death; the spot where the last word he ever uttered was to pronounce

her name ; the spot beneath which he and her father and her brother-boy, Willoughby, slept their last sleep !

“ Do not think it a foolish desire, Blount,” said Mabel, when she rose from her knees, “ that I wish to wear something to-morrow taken from this place. I am loaded with jewels and presents by you all at home ; but I should like to take some gift with me to Church from this long home of those I loved. A flower, or a leaf, or blade of grass even, so that I can wear it near my heart. What is there I can take ? ”

The two glanced round the Chapel, which presented nothing to view but the mossy grass and the grey-grown walls. Mabel looked disappointed ; and Blount was at a loss how to indulge her fancy. He was leaning on the Prior’s tomb, when his eye fell upon the luxuriant ferns within the vault, seen through the broken slab on which the recumbent figure lay.

“ Would you like a fern-leaf, little Gazelle ? ” said Blount.

“ Nothing better : nothing so much. It would please my Aunt Cecilia ! ”

“ Look down here, into the tomb, little Gazelle,”

continued Blount, drawing Mabel to his side. "Are not those beautiful maiden-hair?"

"How luxuriant," exclaimed Mabel; "but how are you to get at them?"

"Little difficulty about that, if you would like one," answered Blount, springing on to the tomb, and jumping into the grave-pit within.

He bent down, and brushed the stems of the ferns aside to examine their roots, before tearing one of the plants from its bed. As he did this, his hand struck against a metal substance, lying hid and buried amidst the grasses and ferns.

"What have we here?" said Blount, lifting a small tin case, slightly corroded with rust. "See, Mabel, what I have found." He raised the case, and handed it up to her. Having selected the most graceful maiden-hair he could find, he handed that also to Mabel, and scrambled out of the tomb.

In a few moments the curiosity and surprise of both was satisfied. Blount removed the close-fitting lid, and the case revealed the papers which had been committed to Colonel Tempest by Mr Probyn on the day he left London for Launcester.

The last mystery of the murder was cleared up, and the motive for that deed brought to light.

The papers within were addressed to Colonel Massey, and were signed by Gerald. They gave a history of his marriage with Bertha Lawson, and of his reasons for having concealed it. In the Book of Hours belonging to his mother, an entry in his hand-writing would be found at the Marriage Benediction, giving the name of the Church, and the date, at which the ceremony was performed in Genoa. He was conscious of his mother's wishes, and dreaded to reveal to her the fact that he had married any other woman than the lady she had selected for him. To disguise the truth and avoid suspicion, it was by his desire that Bertha had consented to be known as Madame Dupont. After his mother's death it was his intention, as soon as his affairs were settled, and he could reside happily at Durham, to announce his marriage and bring his wife and their infant child, Mabel, to their home. Should any casualty arise, he had written and deposited these papers, under seal, with Mr Probyn, in order they might reach his brother's hands. He wished him to know all the facts, and as his heir he commended his wife and child to Willoughby's protection. Though the last in the entail, and with full power to will

the whole property to his infant, he did not think it right to do so. Willoughby ought to succeed. But, to avoid any mischance, he enclosed a Will, the provisions of which he felt certain his brother would carefully carry out. This document had been sealed, and the Will was under the same cover. Blount read it, as he and Mabel stood by the Prior's tomb. It made handsome provision for Gerald's wife and her infant; but in case of Willoughby Massey's death, without a male heir, it directed that the whole property of Durham-Massey should pass directly to his child, or to her children, in case she lived to have a family.

“Failing her, or direct descendants from her, the estate was to go to his heir-at-law, whoever that might be.”

Blount was compelled with his strong arm to support Mabel, so completely was she overcome by the contents of these papers, verifying as they did all that Geoffrey had written; and exhibiting the cruel motive of Creevy in compassing Colonel Massey's death! Geoffrey alone had known the contents of the letter. Creevy was only acquainted with the Will. Colonel Massey dead, he had

thought in Clara Harcourt to have set up a successful claimant to the property.

“So, little Gazelle,” whispered Blount, “you see your wishes will be more than realized, and to-morrow you will take some gift with you to church, a splendid marriage-dowry, darling, from this long home of those you loved.”

“Ay! Blount, my darling, my own darling, I shall not come portionless. I take the gift, to give it all to you!”

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In Launcester church they were married. Mr Cowley joined their hands together, and made them man and wife. Dr Clifford stood by, and, as they passed from the altar, gave them his blessing. Aunt Lawson, Sir Nigel, Mr Probyn, Mr Trigg, and troops of friends gathered around; and many an eye was dimmed with tears of joy, and many a tongue repeated “God bless them” as they passed along the aisle.

From the Church porch to the gateway, adjoining the Castle and the courts, their pathway was strewn with flowers. Children flung them beneath their feet. The merry marriage-bells rang out their peals, telling the distant hills the joyful

news; and the Grammar-School boys, rejoicing in the happiness of their old schoolfellow, flung their College-caps in the air, cheering the bride lustily,

“Turning to mirth all things of earth,
As only boyhood can!”

It was a glorious day. The mountains across the Bay stood out in clear outline against the blue sky. The sea sparkled, and the Laune in full tide wound its way with silvery track past the Quay, and into the encompassing hills about Warfdale, Durham-Massey, and Lonsdale.

As the bridal train passed the old sun-dial in the Church-yard, Blount's eye fell upon the glorious prospect. On one side were the frowning battlements and tower of the Castle within which he had been a prisoner doomed. Beside the Church-yard wall, was the fatal spot where he had thought to die. In the valley beneath, the fields across which he had escaped, the ford he had passed, Scale Hall embosomed in trees, where he had taken horse; across the peninsula, Hest-Bank; the Cartmel point, near which misguided Geoffrey had perished; out at sea, the dark walls of Peele Castle, from under whose

shelter the Arethusa had borne him away in security.

He paused one moment, and pointed with his hand to the fair prospect. "Look at it to-day, my little Gazelle," said Blount, "look how lovely the scene is; how brightly Launcester smiles upon us. Church and Castle, tower and town, mountain and sea, river and valley—what a glorious spectacle! The same dear God who made this scene so fair, looks down from yonder Heaven upon all human goodness, and blesses it with His approving smile! Mabel!—my own for ever now—my wife, faithful, and good, and true, see how He smiles upon your bridal day!"

THE END.

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